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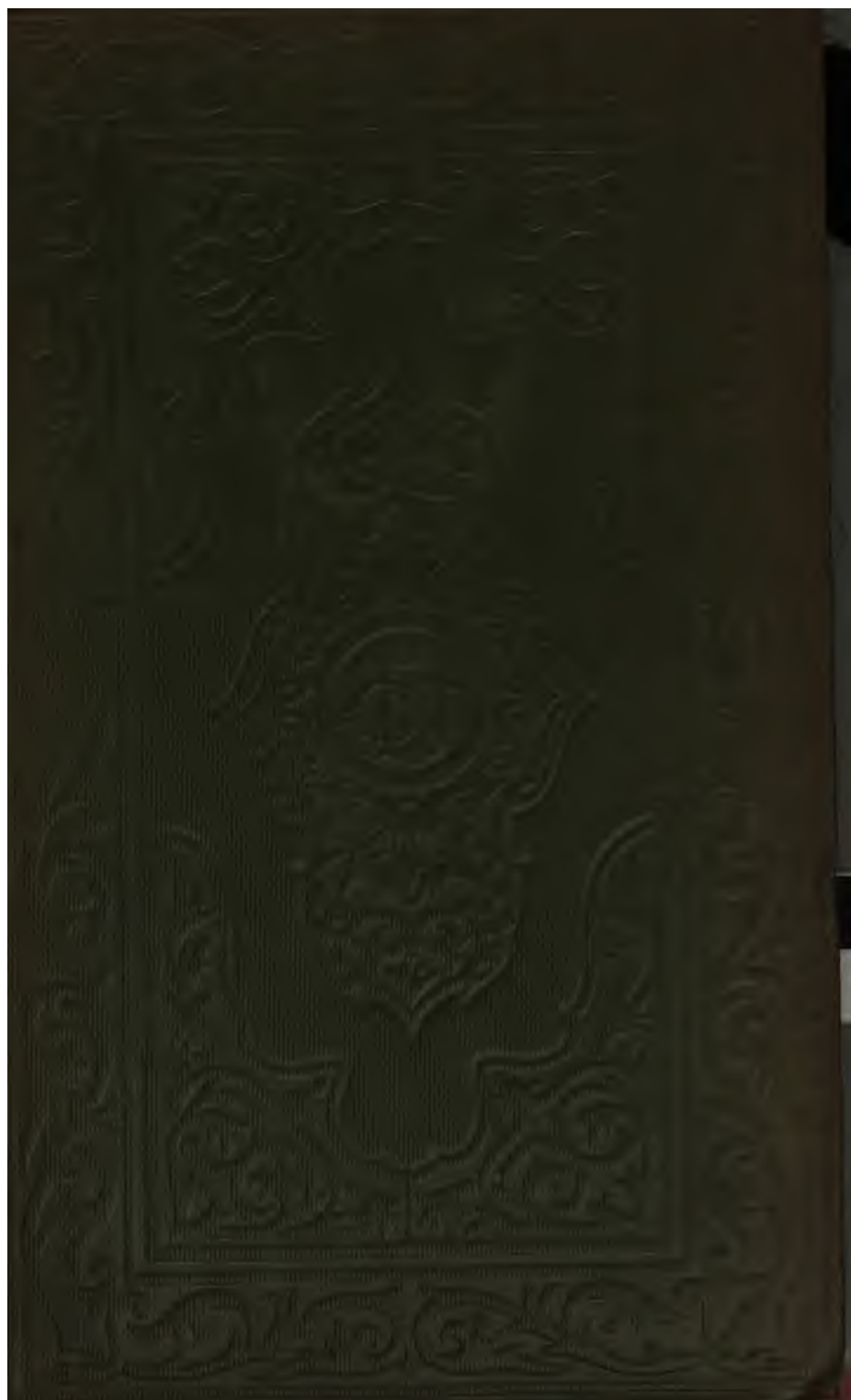
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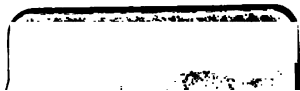
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THE OLD DOMINION.

CHAPTER I.

WITH his usual quick and jerking manner, Mr. Wheatley took off his hat to Miss Davenport; saluted me, made a somewhat indefinite joke about Adam and Eve in the orchard, and then laughed and suddenly stopped as usual.

“ This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Wheatley,” I said; “ for though you hinted you might be coming up to this part of the

country, I did not anticipate meeting you in this very house."

"Oh, Stringer is an old friend of mine," he answered. "We are both Northern men, with Southern principles, as they call us, in the blessed region of Yankee-dom—eh, Stringer? We read, '*Mæcenas atavis edite regibus,*' together, when we were good little boys, and very well behaved; and so of course I come to see him from time to time, '*sub tegmine fagi,*' which may be translated, I presume, under the shadow of his own fig-tree. But, to speak truth, Sir Richard, the proximate cause of my coming here first, instead of going on further, and taking my good friend on my return, was no other than yourself. Thus stands the case. Your good landlady at Norfolk was assailed by sundry rumours—coming, Heaven knows how—that you wanted, and were in dire necessity for, two large black portmanteaus, which you left under her care; and hearing I was going

west, as she termed it, she presented a humble petition, and remonstrance to me to bring them on my buggy, to which, of course, I condescended, knowing that wherever you had strayed, or in whatever direction you had gone, I should be sure to hear everything about you at each house on the road. Thus I learned that you had first gone to Mr. Thornton's; then that you and a young lady," and he took off his hat and bowed to Miss Davenport, "had attempted, unsuccessfully to drown yourselves in the river, and that then you had come on to Mr. Stringer's."

"You did not get the story about the drowning quite right, sir," said Bessy Davenport. "It was I who tried to drown myself, and my cousin would n't let me."

"It came all to the same thing in the end, madam, I presume," replied Mr. Wheatley, laughing. "He had been nearly drowned in saving you, I was told; and as his was a volun-

tary act, as well as yours, the foundation of the story was pretty correct."

"Mine was anything but a voluntary act," said Bessy Davenport; "for I know when I found my pony rolling into the water with me, I would have consented to have my head shaved and be sent to the penitentiary, to be off his back and on the dry land."

"Or to be married and settled in the country," said Mr. Wheatley, "which is worse. However, 'all's well that end's well,' as the old comedy says; and here you are, madam, alive and comfortable; and Sir Richard—I should not have mentioned his style of dignity, God bless the mark! unless I had found he had discovered himself, or been discovered before I came—Sir Richard in fully as good a state of preservation as when I had the pleasure of knowing him in Norfolk. You are aware, I dare say, Sir Richard, that in consequence of our admirable republican

institutions, which cause us to ignore all that we knew before of the horrible aristocratic institutions of Europe, a baronet or a lord in the United States is exactly like a Japan cabinet, a Chinese pagoda, or any other outlandish curiosity. No one knows how it ought to stand, how it ought to be placed, what are its ends, objects or purposes. Some people indeed look upon this aristocracy as a sort of idolatry; regard you as the God, *Fi-fo-fum*, of some distant and pagan nation. The old man of the inn, who has got a fat stomach, and has lost two sons, asked me if I had seen the baronet, just as if you were a piece of porcelain or some other curiosity which people go to see. But the idol is the best image after all; for the poor people—not being travellers—imagine decidedly that you worship nobility in your country. 'Tis a peculiar prejudice, somewhat characteristic of our people. They can conceive no respect for any thing not religious, and very little for any thing that is. We in

the North begin with want of reverence for our parents, and end with want of reverence for our God. Here, in the South, they have a few traditions; and where there is tradition there is some reverence. But amongst us New Englanders, the bump of reverence is altogether wanting. Where it should be, there is nothing but a hiatus; and yet there is plenty of fanaticism amongst us. By the way, Stringer, they tell me there is going to be a camp-meeting to-night, in your neighbourhood. Are you going?"

"No," answered Mr. Stringer. "I do not like camp-meetings. I think they offer very serious and unprofitable interruptions to the ordinary affairs of life."

"That's manly, and a manlike view," observed Mr. Wheatley; "the ladies doubtless differ. Do you go, madam?"

"No," answered Bessy Davenport. "I went once and I will never go again. I did

not know before to what a pitch human nature could be debased."

"Well I shall go," answered Mr. Wheatley; "I always do. I like to see that same human nature in all its phases. I look upon it as one of the most curiously constructed and multi-lateral pieces of machinery that ever was invented, and every side different from the other. Besides, sometimes one gets a great deal of good out of a camp-meeting. I have once or twice heard as good a sermon there as I ever heard in my life—sermons that have quite touched me about the liver and diaphragm. Oh, I shall go certainly! won't you go, Sir Richard?"

• I told him that such was my intention; and it was concluded that we should go together that night after dinner, he assuring me that I should, at all events, both see and hear things worthy of my attention, which I might never have the opportunity of seeing again. We

were to have a whole host of eloquent preachers ; one half the population, black and white, was to be assembled, and a large collection had been made already for lamps and torches to give additional light to the solemn scene.

I could perceive several times during the day, that both Mrs. Stringer and Bessy Davenport were half-inclined to be of the party ; but they could not make up their minds ; and certainly I was very glad that they refrained after I had seen all that was going on in the out-skirts of the ground.

About half past six o'clock, Mr. Wheatley and I set out under the guidance of my good friend Zedekiah who was vastly impatient at our long delay.

“ All the exercises will be over,” he said ; “ and you will come in, in de middle of de unction, without having de pot boiling.”

“ Never mind, Zed, never mind,” said Mr.

Wheatley as we walked on; "we have got fire enough in ourselves to boil half a dozen pots."

Our way lay through the woods, with a cultivated field here and there intervening; and, at length, we began to see lights twinkling through the trees, giving notice that we were approaching the place of meeting. It was a tall grove which had either been long cleared of underwood, or had grown up naturally without such encumbrance. First, we fell upon a number of tents and huts, belonging to those whom I suppose are technically called outsiders; and I cannot say that the scenes displayed by the various lanterns which were scattered about, impressed me with any strong idea of either the sobriety or the morality of that excellent class, whatever might be their views of religion. Farther on, we came upon a scene not without its interest, at least in a picturesque scene. Under the tall trees was stretched out a sort of platform of rough-sawn

deal boards, along the front of which, a great number of lights were arranged, and upon which stood in a row, some eight or nine preachers. With an interval between this platform and the congregation, were numbers of benches and chairs on which were ranged, without any other light than that afforded by the lanterns in front, some three or four hundred women; while through the trees around, I could distinguish a great number of other groups, with here and there a lantern or a lamp.

I need not dwell upon all that ensued; both because most people must have seen descriptions of these meetings, and because in our sober and unexcitable country, the mixture of profanity, enthusiasm and passion—ay, passion, that must be the word—that was displayed could only produce feelings of mingled disgust and abhorrence. I have no doubt that some people were there, full of feelings of deep and sincere religion; but the calm con-

clusion of my mind is, that such meetings tend to anything but the increase of piety. I believe it would be better to visit the temple of Juggernaut, than to visit one of these camp-meetings.

One or two little incidents, however, I must mention, not as characteristic of the scene, but as bearing upon some of the persons whom I have already mentioned in connection with my own story.

On running my eye along over the preachers, one of the first whom I beheld was my ungainly acquaintance Mr. Mc Grubber; and, to say truth, I did not expect to be very much edified by the discourse of the worthy divine. It is true, his long black gown covered up a number of the anomalies in his strange, gaunt figure, though his curiously-shaped head, and very repulsive features still stood forth in their native ugliness. A step before him, actually addressing the congregation, was a stout, tall man, of a very benevolent countenance, to

•

whom I had been before introduced as a Doctor Shepherd. His voice was fine and powerful ; and, as it was raised to its very highest pitch, I caught the greater part of what he said, though I continued standing behind all the benches. The oratorical part of his sermon was, indeed, not very extensive, for there was a sort of chorus—if I may so call what was spoken by himself—which, like those of the Greek tragedies, occupied the greater part of the drama. This consisted of such sentences as, “Come to Jesus, my beloved brethren—come to the foot of the cross—resist not the Holy Spirit. I hear the sighs and groans breaking from your hearts.—Come and drink of the living waters.—come and taste of your sweet Saviour’s love !”

I heard, and I write these sentences, with pain ; for there was a strange want of harmony between them and the scenes I had beheld going on around, which made me feel them to be almost blasphemous in the circumstances in

which they were spoken. The rest of his oration, or sermon, consisted of a somewhat disjointed disquisition upon the rights of the black and white races, and the equality of all men, of whatever colour, in the sight of God, which I should have thought would be considered incendiary by the more violent upholders of slavery, many of whom were, assuredly, present.

Nobody, however, expressed any disapprobation; but, on the contrary, several very pretty young women rushed forward to the foot of the platform, cast themselves on their knees before the preacher, and gave way to the emotions which he had excited in sighs and groans, and cries of "Oh Jesus! sweet Jesus!"

The worthy preacher seemed to me to fondle them with even an excess of brotherly love; but, at length, he gave way to another minister, who was no other than my friend Mr. Mc Grubber.

“Let us go,” said I to Mr. Wheatley. “I have had enough of this sort of thing.”

“No, no, let us stay and hear this fellow,” he answered. “This is one of their great guns, rammed up to the muzzle with grape and canister—to my mind one of the most dangerous fellows in the Union.”

There was no roar of artillery, when Mr. Mc Grubber began. He commenced in a tone hardly raised above a whisper; and it is wonderful how dead was the silence which followed. Every one strained to hear his lightest word; and I must say that all my previous expectations were disappointed. The dull pedagogue of the house, and the boor of the dinner-table, was eloquent, really eloquent on the platform; and I never heard a more shrewd and well-arranged argument against slavery than he contrived to interweave with his exhortations to faith, repentance, and reformation. It was all done apparently quite

naturally ; and the very quietness of his low, but piercing tones seemed to enchain all attention. I can remember several fragments of his discourse.

“ I call upon you, my brethren—I call upon you, the black as well as the white, the Jew likewise and the Gentile, to come to the foot of the Cross and receive salvation. Why standest thou back, thou man of the dark skin? Why shrinkest thou from the presence of thy Redeemer? Is it because of the bonds upon thy hands? Is it because of the degradation which man, thy fellow-man, has inflicted upon thee? Knowest thou not that he is the Saviour, the Liberator, the God to whom judgment belongs—who will avenge—who will wipe the tears from the eyes of the oppressed, and pile coals of burning fire upon the head of the oppressor? Come to Jesus, thy Lord and thy Saviour. Thinkest thou that He regards the colour of thy skin? Has He not said—

“ ‘ *Though thy sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow?* ”

“And shall he who can so wash the spirit, have regard to the hue of the flesh?”

Again, after a while, he said, “But perhaps they have persuaded thee, as they have tried to persuade me, that thou art no man—that thou hast no soul to be saved—that thou art as the beasts that perish. But yet we find by their own law, that in the third, or the fourth, or the fifth degree of white blood, thou becomest as the white man. Will they tell me at what particular hue or shade of colour, the soul—the responsible, the immortal soul—enters into the breast that was before void and tenantless? Nay, nay! Feel, understand, that thou too, whatever be thy colour, art an heir of eternal life, a child of God, an object of the Saviour’s love; that they may shackle thy hands and bruise thy feet in the stocks, and the iron may enter into thy soul; still, the God of Israel is thy God, of whom it is written, *‘Vengeance is mine. I will repay saith the Lord.’*”

He subsequently took even a bolder strain ; and, thrusting all religious topics aside, talked openly of slavery in its moral and political aspect. He did not at all conceal his opinions, nor temper his terms ; but denounced the peculiar institution of the South, as alike degrading to master and man, as evil in itself and all its consequences. One of the most powerful parts of his discourse, as it struck me, was that in which he justified not only slaves themselves in attempting to escape from bondage, but all those who aided them in their efforts for that purpose. Breaking off in the midst of an argument, he suddenly began a sort of tale or apologue ; he told how a white man, an American, a freeman, had been wrecked on the coast of Morocco ; how he had been seized and exposed in the slave market ; sold to the highest bidder ; carried up into the country ; sold again and again ; till, at length, he found himself working in a garden in the neighbourhood of Tangiers. Then he painted

in glowing terms the misery of the poor man's situation; how he had thirsted and panted and pined for liberty; how he had cast his eyes over the blue sea and longed for his native land and his friends, and his family; how the very luxuries of the climate and the kindness of his master were disgusting and abhorrent to him in his state of slavery. He then told us that a friendly Moor in whom he had created an interest, determined to assist him in escaping. The two Europeans who were in the port had entered into the scheme, and that a thousand difficulties and dangers, on which I will not dwell, were encountered and overcome, till, at length, the fugitive was placed safely on board an American ship. "Were these men wrong?" he exclaimed. "Were these men criminal? Had he not a right to seek his liberty however he could find it? Did not the whole of these states ring with applause and admiration of those who enabled him to recover freedom, the best boon of life? Oh, perverted

moral sense, which can in one instance laud to the skies the same conduct which in another, precisely similar, it dooms to the prison or the gallows !”

While all this was going on, I felt some sort of apprehension as to the result, and I looked round from time to time to see what would be the impression upon the audience. The greater part of the listeners were white men, many of them slave-owners, generally men of strong passions, but little subjected to control ; and it would not at all have surprised me to see the preacher dragged from the platform and horse-whipped before the congregation. But I was mistaken : not a sound even of disapprobation met my ear. Some sighed, and some shook the head, but nobody attempted to interrupt the preacher.

As soon as Mr. Mc Grubber had done, I turned away with Mr. Wheatley and we bent our steps towards Beavors, keeping silence till we had got beyond the limits of the meeting.

“Well,” said my companion at length, “what do you think of it all, Sir Richard? Moral, religious and social, isn’t it? Ha, ha, ha! We Americans are strange people, and take the oddest of all possible ways to arrive at our ends. We gather together a whole heap of men, women and children, at night, in the midst of a forest—make two thirds of them as drunk as possible—stimulate the passions of the others by every kind of exciting and enthusiastic discourse, and hug and fondle the young women all for the purpose of promoting religion and morality.”

“That part of the subject, I have long made up my mind upon,” I replied, “from the description of others, and from what I have seen in fanatical meetings, where excitement was not carried to any thing like the same pitch. But that which astonished me the most, was to hear so many men, in the very heart of a slave-holding state, preach doctrines perfectly adverse to its most cherished insti-

tutions, and to see such doctrines listened to, not only with patience, but with assent. I expected every moment to behold worthy Mr. Mc Grubber, heartily pommelled for his pains.

“Oh, you are quite mistaken as to our state of feeling,” said Mr. Wheatley with one of his short laughs. “Virginia is well nigh an abolition state. There is hardly a man here who would not emancipate all his slaves, if he could do so without utter ruin to himself and great danger to the State. Perhaps you are not aware that in the last session of our Legislature, a bill for general emancipation was introduced and lost, I think, only by one vote. Next session, ’twill be carried to a certainty, if my Northern friends will let it.”

“I should think,” I replied, “if the negroes hear many more such sermons as that of the Rev. Mr. Mc Grubber, they will take the matter into their own hands and free themselves, with a vengeance.”

“There is the danger,” answered Mr.

Wheatley, more gravely than was customary with him. "Not that an insurrection of the slaves could ever be successful in this country. You will never see a St. Domingo tragedy enacted here with any success. The whites are too strong and too much upon their guard. But what I apprehend is, that my fanatical friends of the North, not content with letting public opinion, which all tends towards emancipation, work its way quietly, will go a step too far, and either instigate the negroes to some sudden outbreak, which will be put down with some bloodshed, or else create a re-action in public sentiment, by their irritating diatribes. Men may be led who will not be driven; and, let me tell you, you can't drive a Virginian. You have seen to-night, how much these people will bear quietly, when it takes the form of argument; but there can be no doubt, that such men as this Mc Grubber are even now circulating incendiary pamphlets amongst the slaves, which are read to little

knots of them by any one who can read. In other instances, the same principles are spread by pictures and horrid bad prints—a sort of hieroglyphic abolitionism; and if this is carried too far, the tendency to emancipation will be extinguished at once, and every man will arm himself to resist to the death.”

“It is a pity,” I remarked, “that in all questions where there are two parties, each carries his argument beyond its legitimate limit. Passion enters in and exaggerates all things. Passion on the one side begets passion on the other; till, upon points where men were very nearly agreed, they break each other’s heads, because they cannot fix the exact boundary of debate. How ridiculous that, when you admit Virginia has been within one vote of carrying emancipation, she should, as you say, be ready to retrace every step in that direction, simply because the North urges her a little too vehemently to follow it.”

“Stop a minute,” he answered; “that is not

exactly a fair statement of the question. Each State has its reserved rights. It gives up to the federal government the decision of certain questions, affecting the interests of the whole Union. Its domestic laws and institutions it reserves entirely for its own decision. The North—I am a Northern man you must remember—seeks to violate this compact upon which the whole Union depends, and wages war—for it is a moral warfare—against the South upon the institution of slavery. That institution is, in fact, the battle-ground. The South occupies it, and says—‘It is mine. You shall not drive me from it. It is true, I care very little for this debateable ground, and may hereafter, in my own good time, give it up as a thing not worth contending about; but I will *not* give it up to force; and on this ground I will fight you; for, if you carry this aggression by my imbecility or indolence, no one can tell where you will attack me next. In regard to your abstract doctrines, you may be right or you

may be wrong ; but with regard to your interference with my domestic affairs, you are decidedly wrong ; and that I will not tolerate.' In short, my good friend, whatever the North has done, and whatever the North may do, in this sense, only tends to rivet the chains on the hands of the negro more firmly than before. It may seem very absurd, but such is human nature ; and although I admit that in many of the arguments used by the abolitionists, and even by this man, Mc Grubber, to-night, there is a great deal of force, yet their strength is changed to weakness when men become convinced, as every Southern man is, that they are used for political, factious, and partisan purposes. You cannot have a domestic police in such a union as this ; and every man will whip his own children in his own house, when he thinks they deserve it."

"Although I judged it rash and most dangerous," I answered, "to preach such doctrines as we have heard to-night to a large crowd of

negroes, yet I could not help thinking that many of Mr. Mc Grubber's arguments were exceedingly specious, if not cogent: that little apologue of his, for instance, of the white slave in Barbary and his liberation. It struck me as a very happy illustration of his views."

"A cunning piece of rhetoric," answered my acute friend, "peculiarly illustrative of the rhetoric of fanatics. Do you not remark that whenever they have a point to carry, they employ a figure, and in that figure they presuppose a complete parity between two really dissimilar cases. Knock away the *petitio principii*, and what do you find? Here he places a white man, always accustomed to freedom, and with all the intellectual qualities impliedly cultivated by a white man's education, with a white man's wants, wishes, habits, and feelings, exactly upon a par with a negro born upon a plantation, habituated from infancy to slavery, without a thought, a desire, or a

notion beyond the state in which he was brought up, except such as may have been instilled into him by abolitionists. Is this fair to begin with? Is there a parity between the two cases? Then again, the white man, in flying from the bonds which had been accidentally imposed upon him, returns to home, to his ancient habits, to the free use of faculties and endowments which are sure, if rightly employed, to lead to competence, if not to wealth, to independence, and to ease. The negro, flying from his master, on the contrary, leaves family and friends, old habits and associations, food, care, and protection in sickness or old age, for a wide, unfriended, uncertain future, where there is nothing probable but long-protracted labour, unbefriended sickness, unpitied decrepitude, and death on a dunghill. His nominal independence is shackled by the continual necessity of seeking food by labour; and his freedom becomes a curse instead of a blessing, in consequence of the prejudices of

colour and cast. Is there any parity between these two cases? I declare I would a great deal rather be a slave to the hardest master I have ever seen in Virginia—and I have now been here many years—than I would be a free negro in an abolition state. But this was all rhetoric, mere rhetoric, the most cowardly and contemptible of all species of sophistry. Much better to say boldly, ‘You have no right to reduce any man to slavery—you shall not do evil that good may come of it—the Declaration of Independence says, that all men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. By holding any man in slavery, whatever be his colour, you violate this first great principle of the American constitution, you break the solemn pact upon which this union was founded, by which alone she claimed, maintained, and accomplished her independence of Great Britain.’ Better to say this, and fight it

out upon this ground, than go sneakingly to work to get petty advantages in Congress, or criminally strive to render the slaves discontented with their masters. I have come to the conclusion, my dear Sir Richard, that the Abolitionists are the very worst enemies of the slaves themselves, who after all, are but mere ——”

Here his oration, which was much more grave and earnest than anything I had ever heard fall from his lips before, was brought to a close by a loud outcry, proceeding from a spot immediately in front of us. Cries for help, loud exclamations, and blows, seemed to be going on.

“Don’t you do dat, Jack. Oh, you mean to murder me. Help! help! murder! I tel you nottin but de truth. Jim, I did not tink dat of you. Help! help! murder! What you knock my head so for?”

I thought I recognized the voice of my good friend, Zed; and ran forward as fast as possi-

ble ; but before, in the turnings of the wood, I could reach the scene, I heard another voice, which also seemed familiar, exclaiming, in a loud, imperative tone—

“Let him alone ! Fools ! would you make an outbreak before the time ? If you strike him again, I will dash your brains out. The man only says what he thinks true.”

As the last words were uttered, I came out upon that little track of open ground which I have before spoken of as close to the Hunter Wood. A small edge of the moon was peeping up above the trees ; and some half-dozen yards before me was a negro on the ground—no other than my friend Zed—with a second just raising a thick stick over his head. Close by, was a tall, powerful man, whom I afterwards found to be Nat Turner, in the act of throwing furiously back from the scene of conflict a fourth gentleman of the same hue, who had apparently been bent upon the demolition of poor Zed.

I sprang forward at once upon the man who was belabouring my good servant, took the descending blow upon my left arm—which I do believe, it very nearly broke—and knocked him down at once. Zed sprang upon his feet and seized the fellow by the throat as he lay, while Mr. Wheatley stood by laughing and exclaiming—

“Bravo, Sir Richard! a very pretty exhibition of the manly art, as you call it in England. You will know the hardness of a negro’s head for the future; for you will find your knuckles all cut, if I am not greatly mistaken.”

“Let the man get up, Zed,” I said; not very well pleased with my companion’s untimely merriment, for I was smarting from the blow on the arm; and, to say the truth, my knuckles were cut as if I had struck a stone wall; “let the man get up, and if he wants to be knocked down again, he shall have it.”

No sooner was his throat free, however,

than Zed's assailant sprang upon his feet, and took to his heels as fast as he could go. The other two followed at the same speedy pace, although Zed cried aloud—

“ You need not run, Mr. Turner ; you are a good man, and come to help me first.”

However, none of them stayed ; for it is rather a dangerous thing in these states for a negro to be any way mixed up with an affray in which a white man is struck.

As we walked homeward towards Beavors, the cause of the conflict was explained to me and my white companion. It seems that Zed, just at the close of Mr. Mc Grubber's harangue, had taken his way back towards the house, accompanied by two men whom he called Jack and Jim. As they went, they commented amusingly enough, I doubt not, upon all they had heard, passing Nat Turner, who followed them a step or two behind, but who seemed, Zed said, in a gloomy mood, and would neither speak to them nor join their party.

Zed, it would appear, took up ground, in direct opposition to his two swarthy companions. He had had some experience, when his leg was broken, of the condition of a sick and free negro, and he declared that freedom was the most miserable state in the world, and that Mr. Mc Grubber and all the Abolitionists were great fools or great rascals for wishing to force it upon the slaves. The dispute got hot and angry; they mutually began to call each other bad names; the slaves in general feel no good will and a certain degree of contempt towards free negroes. From words they came to blows, and Zed was in the high-road to have his brains knocked out, when Nat Turner came up to occupy one of his assailants, while I delivered him from the other.

There was no great significance in Master Zed's story, excepting so far as it showed that amongst some of the slaves, at least, there was a fierce and eager desire for freedom; but a few words had been spoken by Nat

Turner, just as I was approaching, which made me ponder and doubt. He had said—

“Fools! Would you make an outbreak before the time?”

I could come but to one conclusion, namely, that an outbreak of some kind was contemplated, and that a time was fixed for it. I knew not how soon it was to take place. I determined, however, to watch what was going on around, and without putting my poor acquaintance, Nat Turner, in peril, to give Mr. Thornton a hint that I had reason to believe the existing calm was treacherous, and likely to be followed by a storm.

In the meantime, Mr. Wheatley walked on by my side, laughing and talking in his light, but pungent, way; commenting, notwithstanding Zed's presence, upon the peculiarities of the negro race, and declaring that they were nothing but great babies, always ready to scratch, and fight, and whine upon the very slightest occasion.

We found the whole party, with the exception of Mr. Mc Grubber, assembled in the drawing-room at Beavors. Bessy's lustrous eyes turned upon me eagerly, as she inquired—

“Well, what do you think of it, Cousin Richard?”

“I think it a very disgusting exhibition,” I replied; “and though it may seem a very ungallant speech, all the time I was there, I was thanking Heaven that you were not there too.”

“Just as well, just as well,” said Mr. Stringer. “And now let us have a little claret sangaree, and go to bed, for it is waxing late.”

CHAPTER II.

THERE have been many days in my life which have been most tedious. The imaginative man can perhaps fill them up with his own fancies; but what little imagination I have—and it is certainly very small—must be excited by some external objects.

Mine is a sort of lazy fancy which wants stirring up to activity. I can sit by the side of a dashing brook and see it sparkling and foaming onward, and regard it as a little epitome of life, with its rapids and its shallows;

its sunshine and its shade ; its quiet lapses and its turbulent activity. I can see in its different aspects the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of existence. I can even watch the root-frequenting trout, coming soberly forth into mid-stream like some money-getting recluse, issuing forth into the current of speculation, to be angled for by man or the devil ; and I can endow the old gentleman with all the thoughts and feelings of humanity, wondering what he is calculating now, and asking myself in what stock he is about to embark his capital. But there are some days when there is nothing suggestive in external circumstances ; and dull and wearily do the leaden wings of time flap on. Oh, the heavy hours I have passed in an Indian bungalow, hearing the rain drop, drop, drop for ever, without a book to solace the passing hour, without a sight or sound to waken the soul from a lethargy which is not sleep ; and I have envied the impassability of the good Hindoos who, squatted in the neigh-

bouring sheds, were pleasantly occupied in profound meditations concerning nothing.

But of all the weary days I ever spent, the worst was that which succeeded the evening of the camp-meeting, and many circumstances tended to render it so. A sort of dead monotony seemed to have fallen over the whole family of Mr. Stringer. The boys, whose wicked activity, and genial love of mischief might have afforded some amusement, were closely cooped up during the whole morning by Mr. Mc Grubber. Mr. Stringer himself was busy, supplying all deficiencies which a somewhat prolonged absence had left in the ordering and arrangement of his farm. Mrs. Stringer sat all day long on broidering, like a lady of the olden time. Bessy Davenport sat solemn and demure as a nun, by her side, drawing patterns of collars and cuffs, as if she had been working for her daily bread in a Manchester manufactory. Yet, ever and anon, she looked up at my face with eyes which seemed to say, "Do you

recollect, Cousin Richard, that you are going to fight a duel, and may very likely be killed, and leave me whom you love—you know you do—to mourn you all alone?"

I asked her to go out and take a walk, but she declined, saying it was too warm. And then again Mr. Wheatley had ridden over to Jerusalem upon some business, promising to be back again that evening or the next day. There were not many books in Mr. Stringer's house, and I had brought none with me except one, wishing to make the world my book rather than my oyster.

As a last resource, I went out and took a stroll by myself, and heartily wished the time was come for loading and firing; but there was nothing to amuse me, nothing to occupy my thoughts. And the day was sultry, but not scorching; a thin, white haze covered the face of heaven; the flowers, most susceptible of atmospheric influence, had half closed their petals, and every thing seemed as weary about

the world as I was. Air, I could find none; so, as a last resource, I sat myself down under a tree and began to meditate. I won't trouble you with what I thought about. I composed there a whole essay upon duelling, condemned it logically in principle and practice, thought every man who gave way to it a great fool, myself at the head of them, and rose up just as much determined to fight Mr. Robert Thornton as ever.

The evening of that day passed a little more pleasantly. Mr. Wheatley returned and enlivened us a good deal with his gay talk. Bessy sang us some very beautiful songs, and there seemed to me a deeper sentiment, a more tender expression in her tones, than I had ever heard before.

Yet she did not talk very much to me. She seemed amused, nay, pleased, with Mr. Wheatley; and, had I not known him to be a married man, I might have felt a little jealous. She got into corners with him, and talked in a low

voice ; and, though she sometimes laughed and often smiled, there was a sort of earnestness about her manner which annoyed me a little.

The morning of the next day passed very nearly in the same manner, only Mr. Wheatley was there all the time ; and he, at least, kept up his share of the conversation. About Bessy Davenport, I remarked a good deal of what I may call flutter. She was now sad, silent, gloomy, abstracted ; then gay—almost wildly gay ; but still with a saddened gaiety. I remarked that her eyes often turned to my face, and I thought I understood her better than the day before.

At length, about half-past one o'clock, I rose, saying—

“ I must go, I think. I will change my dress. I have engaged to dine with Mr. Byles, Mrs. Stringer ; and, in the hospitable Old Dominion, I suppose I must pass the night there ; but I shall set out in the cool to-morrow morning, and meet you all at breakfast.”

I thought I heard a gasp from the other side of the table; and, turning round, I saw Bessy as pale as the spring moon.

“Good-bye, for the present, my sweet cousin,” said I, holding out my hand.

She gave me hers as cold as that of a corpse, saying, in a voice very low, but perfectly distinct.

“Farewell, Richard, farewell!”

Just at that moment, Mr. Wheatley exclaimed, “Going to dine with Mr. Byles! What my old friend Billy Byles? Hang me, if I don’t go with you. No one needs an invitation in Virginia, and you will give me a seat in your buggy, I dare say.”

This was rather unpleasant; but it could not be helped, and I only made one attempt to escape the unsought-for companionship: “I have no buggy with me,” I said laughing. “I go on horseback; but I’ll take you up behind me if you like.”

“Oh no,” answered he, “I have a double-

seated drotsky here, and as pretty a pair of little tits as ever were driven. I will drive you over, and we will take your broken-headed man Zed behind, to look after the traps. Come, let us go and make ready." And he quitted the room.

I followed, venturing but one more look at Bessy ; and, in about half an hour, we were rolling rapidly along towards the house of Mr. Byles. After we had entered upon the high road, Mr. Wheatley turned towards me with a smile, saying, "Do you know why I come with you?"

"No indeed," I answered, "unless it be to dine with your old friend Mr. Byles."

"No indeed," returned Mr. Wheatley, with one of his short laughs ; "I never saw bold Billy but twice in my life. I came to take care of you."

"You are really very considerate, Mr. Wheatley," I said drily.

"Very gallant you mean," rejoined my

companion. "You must know there is a young lady with the most beautiful hair and eyes and teeth and lips in the world, and the prettiest foot and ankle, and the most charming little hand, who has got it into her dear little head, that Sir Richard Conway is going to fight some giant or some windmill; and was diplomatizing with me all last night to see if I could not, or would not, tell her all about it, imagining that I had come up to be your second. Now as I was convinced she was in the right—ladies always are right in everything—and knowing that Billy Byles is not the safest man in the world to trust in such matters, I determined to go over with you to act as a sort of moderator."

"I am much obliged to you," I answered, a little mortified; "and much obliged to my sweet cousin Bessy for the interest she takes in me. But I must say, my good friend, this is altogether a little irregular according to our notions on the other side of the Atlantic

Ladies there do not meddle with such matters ; nor friends either, except when they are invited."

"Pray, my dear Sir Richard," interrogated Mr. Wheatley, "do not you, who are clearly a man of the world, fall into the great error of your countrymen, and fancy you can carry England about with you wherever you go? When you are in your own room, with nothing but your trunk, you can be as English as you please ; but the moment you are brought in contact with Virginians, you must be Virginian to a certain extent. We manage these little affairs of honour quite differently here and in Great Britain. There, you are obliged to sneak about as if you were going to steal something, breathe no syllable of the matter to anybody, except the choice friend, and seek out some lonely spot on a common, where you can see for ten miles round, for fear you should be interrupted by the police. Now here, the constable or the township

would load your pistols for you, and keep the ground clear. The first thing a man does when he is called out, is to say to his wife, 'Mary, my dear, I am going to fight Jack Robertson to-morrow. I wish you would look that the lock of my rifle goes easy.' 'I'll look to that,' answers Mary; 'and I'll cut you up some patches. What time would you like the carriage, love? Don't ride on horseback; you know it always shakes your hand.'

I could not help laughing at this description, delivered with capital mimicry of the male and female voices in the colloquy; but I replied, "It would seem all ladies do not take it so quietly, from what you tell me of Miss Davenport."

"Oh, that's quite a different case," said Mr. Wheatley, with a merry glance of the eye. "She is not your wife yet, you know. She has no chance of being an interesting widow, whose husband was killed in a duel. But, joking apart, for I see you wince, Miss Daven-

port has cause to dislike duels. Her father was killed in a duel by a dear friend and near connexion—all in consequence of a confounded mistake; and his death was followed by a long train of law-suits and misfortunes, quite sufficient to give her a horror of the pleasant little practice of being shot at without pay. By the way, I don't think she knows one half of her own history, poor girl!" he added, in a meditative tone. "If she did, it might make some difference."

His words, from the manner in which they were spoken, seemed to me to have more significance than appeared upon the surface; but I had other things to think of, and the next moment he rambled on in his usual way, saying—

"Now don't be surprised, and don't show any irritation, if you find a dozen or two people on the ground, black and white. It is just as likely as not; and mind, if they chance to get in the line of fire, shoot a white man, and not

a black. A white man's life here is worth nothing ; a black man is worth from nine hundred to a thousand dollars. We are a commercial people, and always take a business-like view of these transactions. Pray when is this pigeon-shooting to come off?"

He proceeded to ask a great number of questions, but I cut him short, saying, " You must excuse me, my good friend, for keeping up some of my old English prejudices here, while you and I are alone together. From me you shall hear none of the particulars, though I dare say, Mr. Byles will tell you all about it. With us, it is a matter of etiquette for a principal in such an affair to talk about it to no one but his second."

" Oh, very well," he answered ; " perhaps you are right. In my part of the country, I mean the part where I was born, they carry matters farther than even you do in England, for they won't let us fight at all, and send a man to the penitentiary for asking his friend

to take a morning's walk with him. In fact, the three great distinctions between the North and South are these. In the South, they fight duels whenever they can ; have slaves for their servants ; and grow tobacco and cotton. In New England, they never fight if they can help it ; are slaves to their own servants, and make wooden clocks and wooden nut-megs."

Probably one could not have had a more serviceable or amusing companion when going about a disagreeable piece of business than Mr. Wheatley. There was a lightness, or, to use a vulgar expression, a devil-may-careishness about his conversation which imperceptibly led one away from serious views, even of a serious business ; and when I got out of his carriage at the door of Mr. Byles's house I could have fired a pistol at an antagonist without half the hesitation and remorse which I should have felt an hour before.

The house of Mr. Byles was very different from any gentleman's dwelling I had yet seen

in Virginia, and was indeed an ornamented sort of cottage—the reality of that whereof we see many imitations in Great Britain. It was all upon one floor—unless indeed there were rooms for the servants up-stairs, which I do not know—and parlours, dining-room, bed-rooms, &c., stretched out in a confused sort of labyrinth, which I did not attempt to penetrate any further than I was led by others. An enormous swarm of little black boys, with one respectable elderly gentleman of the same colour, were all ready to receive us; and by the way into which they climbed into Mr. Wheatley's carriage, seized upon all the loose articles it contained, and carried them off, Heaven knows whither, they put me in mind of the little hairy savages, which boarded the ship of Sinbad the sailor, during one of his marvellous voyages. None of them seemed to know anything about their master, however. It was a thing recognized and understood, that who ever came to the house was to make himself comfortable—that

the house would contain any possible number, and that all that was in it was at the disposal of the guests.

Mr. Wheatley had set about providing for himself as soon as we arrived; Zed had rushed away with my valise, where, and about what, I knew not; and I stood solitary for a moment or two, in the midst of a spacious, low-ceiling drawing-room, filled with as many nick-nacks as could have bedizened the boudoir of a London lady. At length, a very neat little boy, of fourteen years of age, with his snowy white jacket and trowsers and apron, contrasting magnificently with the jetty hue of his hands and face, came in and asked with a grace quite Oriental, whether, I was the Honorable Sir Richard Conway.

“Honorable, I trust I am,” I replied, “and my name is Richard Conway.”

“Ah, then, here is your room, sir,” answered the boy. And he led me into a very

handsome bed-room, immediately out of the drawing-room, where I found every possible convenience that either London or Paris could supply. It seemed to have been the pleasure of Mr. Byles to accumulate under the roof of a very unpretending dwelling, the form and structure of which I suspect it would be impossible to describe, all the luxuries of a dozen different climates, and to enjoy them, and make his friends enjoy them, without those conventional restraints with which they are usually associated.

Zed was already there, having arrived at my quarters by some undiscovered passages, and was busy in arranging all the toilette apparatus of Palmer and Savory, upon principles conceived by himself, partly indoctrinated by me.

I threw myself into a chair, and, for a moment or two, gave myself up to meditation, thinking—"This afternoon all these appliances

for luxury and comfort—to-morrow, perhaps, stretched upon that bed with a pistol-shot through my heart !”

I am not much given to such considerations ; but there are moments when they will force themselves upon me, and I end by exclaiming, “ What a farce is life !”

Starting up with this conviction upon me, as I knew it must be near the dinner-hour, I proceeded to change my dress and get rid of the soil and dust which the roads, now thoroughly dry, had left upon me. Not twenty minutes after, my little black friend made his appearance again, with a tumbler full of a bright yellow liquid, upon a silver salver, saying—

“ Dinner will be ready in five minutes, sir.”

“ What is this, my friend ?” I asked, taking up the tumbler.

“ Apple-Jack, sir,” replied the boy.

“ And am I to drink this before dinner ?”

“If you please, sir,” he answered, in a decidedly affirmative tone.

So I drank it, and found it by no means unpleasant.

I suppose in these regions, where vast tracks of swamp and forest-ground still remain unreclaimed, spreading around a sort of miasma, such kind of stimulating drinks which would kill us up in the old-world, are not without their use; and certainly they do not seem to produce the same stimulating effects that they would in Europe.

A minute or two after, Billy Byles himself entered without ceremony, and apologised for having been absent at his stables when I arrived.

“I have asked nobody to meet you,” he said, “because I know your English prejudices upon these occasions; and I have given Bob Thornton a hint not to bring more than two or three friends, at the utmost, to the ground, to-morrow. I find Wheatley, of

Norfolk, brought you over, and he is as good a man as any, to have with us."

"I can assure you he came with no invitation of mine," I replied; "but hearing I was coming over to dine with you, he invited himself, and, of course I could not refuse his company. As we came, I found that Miss Davenport's suspicions and his own knowledge of such affairs had made him aware that some *rencontre* was going to take place."

"All the better, all the better," answered Billy Byles; "and he is always so cool and self-possessed, that in case of difficulty he is ready to take the right ground in a moment. But now let us go in to dinner."

I followed him into the drawing-room, where we found Mr. Wheatley, and thence into an adjoining dining-room. There, as nice and well-cooked a dinner as could be seen in any part of the world, was set before us, seasoned with excellent wines; and my two companions drank pretty deep.

But after all the meats had been removed, and fruits, &c., set upon the table, Mr. Byles interposed, saying—

“Before we take any more wine, we had better look at our tools and be certain that every thing is right and in good working order. Then we will have a bowl of punch and a cigar, a game of piquette, if you like, and then to bed, for we are to be at the Hunter-wood, to-morrow, by five, and that is three miles off — Apollo, my good fellow”—to the black man, who was still in attendance—“fetch me the mahogany case which is on the table in my room, and bring an oil-cruet and a feather.”

The man soon returned with the pistol-case and the other things, and we set to work to examine the instruments of destruction. One screw wanted a little easing. A small portion of rust had gathered about the bore of one of the pistols, and had to be removed. The balls, of which there were a dozen, ready cast, were all smooth and well pared, and

fitted closely and accurately. The patches were nicely greased ; the powder found not to leave a trace upon white paper ; and everything, in short, brought into neat and exact order. My two companions set about the examination as amateurs ; and I, who certainly knew, practically, more of the matter than any of them, and whose life might depend upon the result, thought I might just as well inform my mind upon the same subject as sit idly looking on.

When all this was settled, a bowl of excellent punch was introduced, with some capital Havanna cigars. We talked of matters in no way connected with the business of the following morning ; and the time slipped away without any piquette, till, on looking at my watch, I found it was ten o'clock. Then telling Mr. Byles to have me called in ample time, I retired to bed.

There are moments when thought, having done all its serviceable work, had better be dis-

missed altogether. It is a happy art—and every man should strive to acquire it—to be able so to dismiss thought, when its results are arrived at, and it can be no longer serviceable. Resolving to consign the future to the future, I lay down and slept profoundly, till the negro boy appointed to attend upon me entered the room early on the following morning.

CHAPTER III.

It was hardly day-light when my little, black attendant brought a glass of mint-julep to my bed-side, and told me it was time to rise; and I had hardly refused the beverage, which I did not choose to take that morning, of all others, when Zed hobbled in with his white wool, and his face as polished as an ebony cabinet, all glowing with excitement. I understood quite well that he knew all about the business in hand, and he seemed to look upon himself as a sort of squire to a knight arming for the

tilt-yard, eager and anxious for his master to do great deeds, and never for a moment doubting his success.

The morning was a dull and cheerless one, though it was warm enough. The sky was covered; and a thin, white mist hung over the ground, not sufficient to hide objects, even at two or three hundred yards distance, but sufficient to render them somewhat hazy and indistinct. In fact, it was a morning quite in harmony with the business I was about.

However, I was soon dressed and in the drawing-room, where I found Billy Byles already up and waiting for me.

"I hope you have taken your mint-julep," he said; "it will steady your hand."

"Thank you," I answered; "my hand is quite steady enough, and I don't think brandy would make it any firmer."

"Well, come and take some breakfast, at all events," said my host; "never fight upon an empty stomach."

"I have been obliged to do so before now," I answered; "but I will take some breakfast if we have time; for, to say truth, I am very hungry."

"Oh plenty of time, plenty of time," answered Mr. Byles. "I always like to be on the ground first, so I took care you should be called early enough. Wheatley will be here in a minute. I woke him myself, and the lazy dog said the great bore of fighting duels, was the getting up in the mornings."

We had not been five minutes at table, when Mr. Wheatley appeared, just as gay and unconcerned as ever; and although I could not help feeling an impression of some heavy thing impending, I joined in the conversation as cheerfully as I could, feeling that it was of no use to think of what was coming, when it could not be avoided. It had been agreed that we should proceed to the ground in Mr. Wheatley's double-seated carriage; and about twenty

minutes after we sat down to breakfast, it was announced that the vehicle was at the door.

When I went out, I found three or four negroes beside Zed, surrounding the carriage : Mr. Wheatley and I took our seats in front : Billy Byles sprang into the hinder division : Zed scrambled in beside him, with the pistol-case under his arm, and away we went towards the place of encounter. The moment we started, I could see two or three of the negro boys take to their heels and run on towards the woods as fast as their legs could carry them ; and I could not but think of the speech of the poor old Scotch nobleman, when going to be beheaded : “ You need not run so fast, boys. There will be no fun till I come.”

Billy Byles acted as pilot, directing Mr. Wheatley how he was to drive ; and I must say a rougher ride I never took in my life ; for we went over fields without the slightest pretension to a road ; fences we pulled down

unceremoniously to let us pass ; and I certainly did think more than once, that the whole business would end in our getting our necks broken. I was afraid, too, that various evolutions and manœuvres which we had to perform would make us late ; and more than once I took out my watch to see how the time went.

“Plenty of time, plenty of time,” said Billy Byles. “You see that wood there. Well that’s the Hunter-wood, and we just cross the narrow part by the path into the savannah and there we are.”

The wood was soon reached, and out we all got, for the carriage could go no farther.

“Here, give me the pistols,” said Mr. Byles ; “you stay here by the horses ; we shall be back in half-an-hour.” And leading the way by a very narrow path, he speedily brought us to that long strip of open ground which I have before described, and which I had passed

in pleasant talk with Bessy Davenport. We now struck it considerably higher up, however; and at no great distance from the high-road to Jerusalem. But it had a much more melancholy aspect now than when I first saw it. The mist which I have mentioned, rested more heavily in that narrow avenue; and the trees cut off all the rays of the sun, who was struggling, as he rose, to disperse the gray clouds that covered the sky. All was sombre and cheerless-looking, and Billy Byles laid down the pistol-case under a live oak tree and rubbed his hands as if it had been winter.

I gazed up and down the long open strip to see if my antagonist was apparent, and Mr. Byles, exclaimed in a congratulatory tone; "First on the field, you see, Sir Richard; but we have five minutes yet to spare. I won't open the case till they come, for this unpleasant mist may damp the tools."

"Rather bat-fowling work," said Mr.

Wheatley. "Lucky, you chose pistols; for I don't think one could see at rifle-range."

Before the five minutes were over, a gig, with two men on horse-back appeared, towards the high-road end of the savannah, halted there and having tied the horses to the trees, came forward on foot towards the place where we were standing. Before they came quite close, they paused again; and a somewhat sharp discussion seemed to go on, between Mr. Robert Thornton, whom I could now distinguish, and one of his companions, for their gestures were exceedingly animated.

They then approached and Mr. Thornton saluted me by touching his hat to which I returned a silent bow.

"Well, Sir Richard," he said, "for my own part, I don't see why you should not apologise even now, if you like it."

"I have no apology to make," I replied;

“and, moreover, we came here, I think, to act and not to talk.”

As I said this, I turned away and took a step or two up and down the meadow, leaving the gentlemen, who had accompanied me and Mr. Thornton, to make their arrangements as usual. They were all pretty well skilled and experienced in the business, I imagine; for the pistols were loaded and the ground measured out very rapidly. I was not sorry for this, as I had nothing to amuse myself with but watching some half dozen black faces, peeping out from behind the trees at the end of the wood.”

“Now, Sir Richard,” said Mr. Byles, stepping up to me with a pistol in his hand; “you will have the goodness to stand here where I have put down my glove. The words are, ‘One, Two, Three, Fire! But you can fire any time after the word, Three.’ ”

“Mind, you keep your arm to your side and cover your angles,” said Mr. Wheatley.

“I will take care,” I answered with a smile; “I am not quite in experienced in such affairs.”

“I suppose not from the way you take it,” he replied.

And when they had placed me in a proper position, my two friends withdrew.

I could see that my adversary, Mr. Robert Thornton, marched up to his ground with every appearance of boldness. I had been rather inclined, by his preceding conduct to think that he was somewhat nervous; but no symptom of timidity was now apparent—except indeed a slight touch of swagger in his walk and manner.

As he stood before me, I measured him deliberately with my eyes, and thought I had him very sure. He stood on a somewhat angular position which I was sorry for, as I did not wish to injure him severely, or run the risk of killing him, though I certainly did in-

tend to wound him so as to prevent him doing any more mischief for the present.

There seemed to be some little talk between himself, his second, and another friend—about what I know not; and then the two gentlemen left him; and, a moment after, the words were given by Mr. Wheatley.

A slight degree of hesitation, remorse, or what you will, made me reserve my shot till the word “Fire!” had been pronounced. My antagonist fired at the word, “Three,” but his ball went quite wild. I then raised my hand and fired, being perfectly certain of hitting him, I thought somewhere about the elbow. I fancied, too, that I saw him stagger a little; but he did not fall, and he exclaimed, loudly—

“Give me another pistol.”

Billy Byles and Mr. Wheatley both ran up to me with a fresh weapon, and while the former put it in my hands, the latter whispered—

“Mind what you are about. He will aim better this time; you have grazed him, and his blood is up. Don’t try to spare him, or you’ll get killed yourself.”

It all passed in a moment; and they were gone back to their places before I well knew what had occurred. I continued, however to eye my antagonist deliberately, while the words were spoken, and I could see that he was scanning me in the same manner. This time we both fired together at the word “Three;” and, almost before I heard the report, I felt a smart blow upon the arm, which made me recoil a little with a sensation as if a piece of hot iron had been run into the flesh; but Robert Thornton fell back at once amidst the long grass, and I lost sight of him.

My two friends were up with me in a moment.

“You are wounded, you are wounded,” said Billy Byles, with friendly anxiety. “I saw you stagger. You must be wounded.”

“But slightly,” I replied; “take the pistol and just get my handkerchief out of the pocket.”

I had learned a little of surgery in India, and saw, by the jerking of the stream of blood which was flowing from my arm, that some artery was cut. I therefore made my two friends fold the handkerchief and tie it tightly some way above the wound, by which means the bleeding was soon reduced in quantity, though it continued to ooze a little, though not sufficient to do any harm.

I then turned my eyes to the spot where my opponent had stood. Three persons had now gathered round him, one of whom had raised Thornton's head and shoulders on his knee.

“You have done for him!” said Billy Byles. “He seems as dead as a mackerel.”

“I hope not,” I replied. “I did not intend it; but he stood awkwardly, and it was impossible to be sure of one's shot. I do hope he is not killed.”

“Pooh, nonsense!” ejaculated Mr. Wheatley. “What did he come here for, but to kill you, or be killed himself? We had better make the best of our way to my buggy and get home as soon as possible, for I suspect the ball is still in your arm, and we must send for the surgeon.”

“I will see how he is first,” I answered; and walked quietly up to the spot where my antagonist lay.

His friends were perfectly gentlemanly and polite; and the two who were standing up, bowed civilly as I approached.

“I’m afraid he is gone, Sir Richard,” said one of them.

“I hope not,” I replied, with a sensation I cannot describe. “I can assure you I did not intend it; I only sought to wound him.”

“You did that at the first fire,” answered the other. “See here—your second shot has gone through his chest”

“I now perceived that the blood was streaming from one wound in the fleshy part of the back, just below the shoulder-blade, and behind the right arm. This seemed of no great consequence; for it was clear it had not penetrated the chest; but there was another wound much more formidable in appearance, where the ball had entered the side, just in front of the arm, and had issued out at the other side a little farther forward. That it had touched the lungs, I could not doubt; but though I do not know much of anatomy, I felt sure that the heart must have escaped, notwithstanding the death-like paleness of his face, and the state of complete insensibility in which he lay. I knelt down, and put my fingers on his wrist; the pulse was very feeble, but still beating free, and I said—

“Gentlemen, he is not dead, and I should hope will soon recover. If you would take my advice, you would try and restrain the bleed-

ing as much as possible. Get him to the nearest house, and send for a surgeon immediately. The shaking of a carriage may produce greater hemorrhage; but there are a number of negroes about who can carry him more easily."

"Hi, boys!" cried Billy Byles; "come here, come here!"

And immediately at least a dozen black men and lads ran out from the woods towards the scene of action.

"You had better get home, yourself, sir," said the gentleman who had before spoken to me; "for I see you also are wounded, and the blood is running off the tips of your fingers. One thing I will say, Sir Richard; a fairer fight I never beheld. You have behaved quite like a gentleman, and a man of honour, and a d——d good shot too."

Seeing that I could be of no further service, I bowed and retired from the ground. As we walked along through the little path in the

wood, it became a question where I was to go. Mr. Byles wanted me to return with him to his house ; but Mr. Wheatley, more prudently urged that I should go back at once to Mr. Stringer's. " It is nearer by a mile," he said ; " and, besides, he will have plenty of women there to take care of him. He-nurses are always bad ones, my friend ; and, moreover, there may be certain persons who may tease their little hearts to death, to know how he is going on, who would not venture to come to the house of a gay bachelor to see him."

This latter argument was very conclusive in my own mind ; but I made light of the wound, saying, " Oh, this is a mere nothing. I shall be well in a few days." Although, to say sooth, I felt very unpleasantly faint.

We soon reached the carriage, which we found tied to a tree ; for Zed, it appears, would not be debarred the pleasure of sharing in the day's sport. He came hobbling after us, the next instant, however ; untied the horses,

placed the pistol-case under the seat, and after fumbling for a minute in a corner, produced an old champagne-bottle, which he held out to me, saying—

“Here, master, take a drop o’ dis—good old Rye—you look mighty white and bleeding like piggie. My ole massa, never go out to fight without taking some rye, wid him in case of de worse.”

I took some of the whiskey, which, to say the truth, was not altogether unnecessary, for I had lost a good deal of blood. Then, requesting my two companions to tie the handkerchief still tighter, I got into the carriage and we drove off towards Mr. Stringer’s.

CHAPTER IV.

As we came in sight of Beavors, the fact arose suddenly to my remembrance that, although Mr. Stringer and his family themselves were not very early in their habits, Bessy Davenport was generally up and about, shortly after daylight. In spite of all that I could do, I was covered with blood; my white summer trowsers were soaked and dabbled; and there was no cloak or great coat in the carriage which I could throw over me to conceal the ghastly spectacle. I knew that whatever might be

her feelings towards me, the sight would alarm and agitate her ; and, turning my head towards Mr. Byles, inquired if we could not get into the house by some back-way, which would enable me to reach my room unperceived, and remove the "bloody witness from my person."

"Oh, yes, master," answered Zed, taking the words out of Mr. Byles's mouth, and apparently divining instantly what was passing in my mind : "Master Wheatley drive round by the right hand road to the back. Then we go through the pantry-hall, and up the little back stair-case, which runs behind Miss Bessy's room. But she never use it ; she always go down the great stairs. Then your room is just opposite, and you can slip in in a minute."

Zed's plan seemed admirable, though it did not turn out as well as we expected. We reached the back of the house, indeed, unperceived, and entered what Zed called the pantry-hall.

It is wonderful how often when we have laid a scheme for any purpose as perfectly

as human calculation could arrange it, some little circumstance occurs which does not usually happen more than once in a year, and throws all our well-conceived arrangements wrong.

The very moment after, leaning on Mr. Wheatley's arm, I had entered the pantry-hall by the one door, in came Bessy Davenport by the other, with a bunch of flowers in her hand; exclaiming, "Henry, Henry, give me a glass of water."

The next instant, her eyes fell upon me and she turned deadly pale. Everything was forgotten in the agitation and terror of the moment—reserve, playfulness, eloquetry, if you will, the presence of strangers. She dropped the flowers at once upon the floor, sprang forward and threw her arm partly round me as if to support me, exclaiming, "Oh, Richard, Richard! You are hurt! you are wounded! I knew it, I was sure of it. My heart told me it would be so."

The best medicine that physician ever compounded could not have done me half so much good as her words and her look. "I am very little hurt indeed, Bessy," I answered. "A little blood makes a great show, and it all comes from my arm, which will be well, I dare say, in a couple of days."

"Only your arm, only your arm," she said. "Oh, Richard, do not deceive me."

"I do not indeed," I answered; "it is only my arm. Ask Mr. Wheatley,"

"But you are so pale," she continued; "you may bleed to death. Henry, get a horse directly, and gallop over to Jerusalem, tell Doctor Christy to come here without a moment's delay. Say, Sir Richard Conway is badly wounded. Come to your room, Richard; I can stop the blood—I think, I hope. I am somewhat of a surgeon amongst the servants," she added, with a faint smile. "Come this way, for all the boys are in the hall."

And she led me by a small stair-case, which,

passing at the back of her own room into which there was a door from the landing, opened by another door upon the main corridor.

I was soon in my own room, and seated in the arm-chair, with Mr. Byles, Mr. Wheatley, Zed, and Bessy around me. Nothing could persuade the beautiful girl to go. In spite of all we could say, she would see the wound herself, and treat it after her fashion, which, I must say, she did with considerable skill. My coat was taken off, the sleeves stripped up, and though I could see her give a shudder, when the blood spouted forth, on the bandage being removed, she did not lose her firmness for a moment.

“Now tie it round tight again, tie it round tight again,” she cried, to Mr. Wheatley who had unfastened the bandage to remove my coat. “Zed, run into my room, and get two or three handkerchiefs. Juno will give them to you.”

“Plenty of handkerchiefs here, Miss Bessy,” said Zed, handing her some from my port-manteau ; and, taking one of them, she folded it several times. Then placing it on the wound, she bound another tightly over, so as to act as a compress, and watched in deep silence for a minute or two to see if it would have the effect she wished. The blood oozed through after a time, but very slowly ; and, with a sigh, as if of relief, she said—

“That will do, Richard. It will not bleed much or long now ; but you must sit quite quiet till the surgeon comes.”

I took her dear little hand in mine, and pressed my lips upon it ; and not caring for the presence of others, she left it still in mine, gazing thoughtfully into my face.

She was still in the same position, when Mr. Stringer entered the room, hurriedly in his dressing-gown.

“What is the matter ? What is the

matter?" he exclaimed. "They tell me you are wounded, Sir Richard?"

There were plenty to explain the matter, and each gave his own version of the affair; Mr. Wheatley, in his peculiar and pungent manner; Billy Byles drily, and in a few words; but Zed, with amplification and details, which I would fain have stopped, both on my own account and on account of one of the listeners. He seemed to consider it a point of honour that his master should not have come off worst in the encounter, and he took particular pleasure in dwelling upon the two wounds which Robert Thornton had received.

"Ah, yes, he hit him every time" said Zed; "and would have shot him through from side to side the first shot, only, I fancy, he did not want to kill him, Master Stringer. That is how he got his wound; for if he had just sent the ball through his head the first fire, he would not have been wounded at all."

"Then is the unfortunate man dead?" asked Bessy, in a low tone.

"No, no," I answered; "he is not dead, my dear cousin. I assure you, I did not intend to kill him; but he stood so, that it was almost impossible to prevent his injuring me without the risk of taking his own life. I think—I trust he may still recover."

Bessy put her hands over her eyes, and sat silent; and I could not but remember what I had heard on the preceding day, that her father had fallen in an encounter of the same kind.

Though Hope is a very persuasive angel, yet there is a certain little devil, lying hidden in some of the deep windings and turnings of the mind, which is always, with low-voiced cunning, suggesting something contrary to the flattering promises of the charmer. Even now he whispered—

"Bessy finds a parity between the case of her father and that of this man. However, she may dislike him—whatever may be her

feelings towards me—some of her sympathies are enlisted on his side.”

I did not like the thought at all; but she sat quietly beside me, and did not seem to entertain the slightest thought of quitting the room.

“It strikes me,” said Mr. Stringer, after a few unimportant enquiries, “that there are altogether too many people here round a wounded man. Sir Richard does not seem to be losing much blood now, and some of us had better retire till the surgeon arrives, who, I find, has been sent for. Bessy—Miss Davenport—I think I must constitute you head nurse; for you know Mrs. Stringer’s nerves are not equal to such scenes, and you have been brought up with more strength of character.

“I am as weak as a child,” said Bessy, in a low tone; but then, instantly recovering herself, she added, in a gayer manner, “Well, I will undertake the task and risk all sorts of ingrati-

tude. You must not think me bold, Richard, if I come in and out at all times and seasons to see to my patient's progress—being my cousin too, I have a right. Your servant will stay with you, of course. Can't you have a bed or a sofa or something put up there for him, Mr. Stringer? I am going away just now to take some hartshorn, or some mint-julep, or some rye-whiskey, or something—what would you recommend gentlemen?—I have just found out that I have got some nerves, and am not quite so much accustomed to scenes of blood and slaughter as you are.”

It struck me that there was the slightest possible touch of bitterness in what she said; but I found afterwards that I was mistaken. Strong emotions, even of the tenderest kind, sometimes have recourse to hard words, and even to light jests, to hide themselves not only from the eyes of others, but also from the sight of those who feel them.

Bessy, Mr. Byles, and Mr. Stringer quitted

the room, leaving me with Zed and Mr. Wheatley. The latter, with great tact and good sense, chatted so calmly and cheerfully that the time seemed very short till Dr. Christy, the surgeon, quietly, and almost silently, entered the room. He did not wear creaking shoes, that besetting sin of medical men. His manner was all very calm and composed, without the slightest haste or bustle in his aspect, although I could judge from the perspiration on his forehead that he had ridden hard. After a few minutes' conversation on subjects barely relevant to my situation, he proceeded to examine my arm.

“The ball is still in,” he said; “your muscle is very firm, Sir Richard, or they had not put powder enough in the pistol. However, we shall easily extract it, for it lies perfectly straight.”

He put me to a good deal of pain, however, though not for more than a few seconds; and then dropped the bullet into a basin of water.

I thought it was all over ; but he must needs probe the wound again, and then, shaking his head, observed—

“There is something more, I am sorry to say. We must not leave any thing extraneous in the wound, for fear of bad consequences hereafter. A moment more, and it will be all over. Whatever it is I know its exact position.”

He then had recourse to the forceps again, and, in an instant, brought up a small splinter of bone, not bigger than an ordinary iron tack.

“That is unfortunate,” he said ; “the ball has just touched the bone, which may delay your recovery for some days, and will require you to keep quiet and be very cautious. Otherwise the wound might heal almost with the first intention.”

“I think first intentions are always best, Doctor,” said Mr. Wheatley ; “although they say second thoughts are. However, my friend

must submit to fate, like the rest of us, and I presume there is nothing dangerous about the wound."

"Nothing whatever," answered the surgeon, "if he is but prudent. I think, Sir Richard," he continued, "from what I have heard of your conduct on the field, it will be a satisfaction for you to know that there is a prospect of your antagonist recovering. He was brought to town at once, and I and my partner saw him. One was merely a flesh wound; the other was one of those curious wounds that we sometimes see, which, going close to several vital organs, leaves them all untouched. An inch further back would have sent the ball through his heart; an inch higher up would have carried it through one of the great vessels of the lungs. Neither were touched; and, though he must suffer for a long time, I think, from various indications, he will recover. And now, if I might advise you, you will go to bed; keep yourself as quiet as possible, and do not

rise till I see you to-morrow. I will send you a draught to insure you a good night's rest and keep down fever. But you had better have somebody in the room with you, lest, in tossing about, the compress should get deranged and hemorrhage return."

Thus saying, he left me. But I cannot pretend that I followed his instructions to the letter. I had a notion that Bessy would return to see me, and, therefore, I determined to sit up till she came. Nor was I disappointed. The surgeon had not been gone ten minutes when she knocked at the door; and appeared to have quite recovered from the shock of the morning.

"I am determined," she said, "not to care for what people may think in England, although we independent American women are often shamefully afraid of English opinions; but I cannot think there can be anything wrong in attending upon a sick cousin.—Can there, Mr. Wheatley?"

“Not in the slightest degree,” answered Mr. Wheatley. “It was a part of the old-time chivalry. Then every lady had a great number of cousins, and they all attended upon them when they were wounded, which was, I think, every other day.” And he gave one of his short, low laughs.

Nevertheless, Bessy stayed with me for a full half-hour; and I do not believe she would have gone then, if Mr. Wheatley, much to my annoyance, had not given her to understand that Dr. Christy had ordered me to go to bed directly.

The rest of the day passed dully enough. Towards night, a good deal of pain and fever came on; and though that opiate produced some wild and uncomfortable sleep, I woke the next morning, feeling languid and exhausted. But I had suffered in the same manner from a previous wound; and, when the surgeon returned, he said, I was going on as well as could be expected.

CHAPTER V.

I do not wonder that the patriarchs lived to the good old age which they attained. I do not wonder that they counted by hundreds where we count by tens. Sparsely scattered over the face of earth, with their flocks and their herds and their servants; living a frugal and a homely life; inheriting a constitution, unbroken by many generations of vice, indulgence and luxury; with constant but gentle activity of body, and rare and scanty excitement of mind—there was little in the whole course of their existence to wear down the frame and to impair the health. The sword was so seldom drawn—in short—only enough to keep it from rusting—that it did not fret

the scabbard. With us, how different is the case! The pursuit of wealth, of pleasure, of fame; the constant exertion of mind and of body; the struggles of an over-packed population, each man like the cuckoo whose offspring tried to shoulder the other out of the nest; the wearing and fretting of continual disappointments; the mosquito bites of small cares; the everlasting thought for the morrow—all these things break us down and shorten life, "*Et corpore frangitur curis et laboribus.*"

Nevertheless, in this troublesome and toilsome existence—troublesome and toilsome even to those whom fate and fortune have most favored—come lapses, either of calm and pleasant tranquillity, or of dull and heavy inactivity. Such was the case with me for several weeks. My wound would have healed, probably, at once, had it not been for the slight injury to the bone of the arm. That, however, produced a long train of unpleasant, though not dangerous, symptoms, for which there were no

remedies but patience and perfect tranquillity. Anything like exercise was actually forbidden ; and I found to my cost when, once or twice, I broke through the rule, that violent irritation and even inflammation followed. There was nothing for it, but to submit quietly to a sort of life which was not at all congenial to my habits or my taste.

But there were many mitigations to a state which would have been dull and wearisome enough in ordinary circumstances. I suffered very little as long as I was perfectly quiet. I was allowed to rise and go down to the drawing-room with my arm in a sling ; and I had constantly the society which was most delightful to me, with very little of that which might have annoyed or irritated me. Sometimes there was a little business to break monotony ; sometimes a little cheerful society from without. But I had always Bessy Davenport near me ; for, by some arrangement, made between her and Mrs. Stringer, she had agreed to stay

at Beavors and keep her friend company, while Mr. Stringer, his boys, and the tutor, went up into the interior of Virginia to visit the natural bridge, Weir's cave, and the Peaks of Otter. Perhaps my situation had some share in deciding her to stay; at least, she said so; for Bessy had a habit of always putting the most open and straightforward construction upon her actions, depriving others of the power to insinuate motives by boldly avowing her own.

One day when Mrs. Stringer was saying how kind it was of her to stay with her during Mr. Stringer's absence, she answered laughing—

“I should always be glad to stay with you, my dear friend, at any time when I could be of comfort or assistance to you; but you must not thank me on the present occasion; for the truth is, I am staying to nurse and amuse my cousin Richard there. And she did so untiringly.

I do not intend to enter into many details of

the next month's events, if indeed events they could be called ; but some must be slightly touched upon. The day after the duel, I had several visitors—Mr. Henry Thornton, Billy Byles, the sheriff of the county, and others. Mr. Thornton continued to come, two or three times every week, and once or twice brought Mr. Hubbard with him, when some little matters of business were talked of. Mr. Wheatley returned to Norfolk on the morning of the third day ; and I should certainly have felt his loss much, had not Bessy Davenport been there. From Dr. Christy I heard every day of the progress of Robert Thornton, and glad indeed I was to find that the surgeon's favourable anticipations were likely to be verified. It is true, the unfortunate man struggled for his life, during nearly ten days ; but from that time, his convalescence, though slow, was steady. It is true, that he was somewhat thrown back at one time by the decision of a court in regard to Aunt Bab's slaves. My

claim was admitted; and though an appeal was taken, the slaves were placed in the hands of the sheriff, till the case could be finally decided.

“There can be no doubt whatever upon the question,” said Mr. Hubbard, when he communicated the facts to me; “and the poor people, in the end, will be put at your disposal. But with regard to the landed property,” he added, shaking his head, “we shall have more difficulty. They are trying to get it escheated, and, I fear, we shall not be able to prevent it. I think, nevertheless, I see a course of proceeding to frustrate their ultimate object of getting possession of it themselves, though we cannot place it absolutely in your hands.”

“How is that, my dear sir?” I asked.

“Oh, a little legal fiction,” he answered, “a little legal fiction; but you must let me mature my scheme, and then I will tell you all about it.”

I was well contented to let the question re-

main in abeyance ; for, to say the truth, I did not care how it was decided. Having fully as much as I wanted, and a surplus for any contingences which might involve increased expenditure, I was not anxious for an augmentation of fortune, although I will confess that I felt no little desire to frustrate those land-sharks always desirous of preying upon the inheritance of others, which swarm in the southern states of this union. It is quite extraordinary, how many, how voracious, and how dexterous they are.

With the exception of these visits of courtesy or business, few events occurred to interrupt the perfect tranquillity of Beavors, especially after the departure of Mr. Stringer and his sons. One day was a complete pattern of the other, except that a little variation crept in as I improved in health. After a time, I was permitted by the doctor to take a short walk out in the cool of the morning, and an-

other in the evening, with a strenuous recommendation not to carry exercise to the length of fatigue.

I had learned to know exactly the sound of the opening of Bessy Davenport's door on the great corridor. Her maid always went in and out the back way ; but she had seldom got on the veil which she usually wore over her head, nor raised her parasol from the seat in the hall, before I was at her side ; and then we had a short, dreamy walk in the shady parts of the plantation, which afforded some of the pleasantest moments I have yet known in life.

It may seem very strange that we who, in the early part of our acquaintance, had talked a great deal of love and marriage, and the mistakes that are made in both, now seldom touched upon such topics at all. Nothing had been said, nothing had been done, to bind us in any shape to each other ; and a certain tranquillity was in the minds of both, I am

assured, which seemed as if all had been spoken and all was understood.

We walked along, side by side. We conversed on various topics, some strange and new, at least, to one of the parties—of Europe and its monuments—of customs, of scenes, of enjoyments, all different from those of the land in which we then were—nay, of a still older world in the far East, the cradle of the human race, where, as if for the purpose of preserving a connecting link between the past and the present, God had implanted in the mind of man a tenacious adherence to ancient habits, which gives us, to the present day, living pictures of those early times when His word was first revealed to a chosen nation separated from all other people, to preserve, amongst struggles, and contentions, and errors, and follies, the knowledge of the one true God.

Then she would tell me strange tales of the aboriginal inhabitants of this vast continent; of the Indians, which, even in her young days,

had been numerous in Virginia ; and we would deviate together into some of the by-paths of thought, leading us afar into discussions of art and science, on the state of society, and what was good and what was bad in the present artificial condition of man.

A great change appeared to have come over her, I knew not how or why. Her opinions seemed softened — perhaps I may call it weakened. At all events, they were put forward with less decision. A more calm, a less cutting spirit seemed to animate her ; and she would often laugh gaily at her former harsh opinions upon some subjects, and say—

“ My dear Richard, I have all my life been acting on the defensive, and been obliged to show a bold front to the enemy ; especially,” she added, with a quiet smile, “ when I feared there might be treachery in the garrison.”

Then we would walk home again, and take our early breakfast, often without the company of Mrs. Stringer, who was in delicate health ;

and if Werter fell in love with Charlotte cutting bread and butter, I might surely feel my love increased, when I saw those beautiful hands tending to all my wants, and cutting the food which I was still unable to cut for myself. She would trust nobody else to do it; and certainly she did it better than any one. Oh those little marks of kindness and tenderness! how they sink into the heart, and how peculiarly they are woman's! After breakfast, she would often read to me for an hour or more; and then we would sit side-by-side in the shady part of the house—for now the full heat of summer was upon us—speaking very little; but both feeling very deeply, I do believe.

Our evening walk was shorter than that of the morning; for every one seemed to have a horror of the dews of sun-set; but the after-hours, till bed time, passed very pleasantly; for Bessy now had no coquetry about her singing, and her store seemed inexhaustible. Yet there were some songs, which, though perhap

neither so rich in melody nor so scientific in composition, pleased me more than others ; and I would have them over and over again. Perhaps it was that there seemed some fanciful relation between them and our mutual fate. One I remember especially :

BESSY'S SONG.

" I will not love," the maiden said,
" My breast is hard as steel ;
No heart e'er loved, but was betrayed,
Mine will not, shall not feel."

Why droops the maid her sunny head ?
Why swims her dewy eye ?
What is there in that distant tread,
That makes her heart beat high ?

" I will not wed," the maiden said ;
" None ever me shall see,
Like captive in a triumph led,
A tyrant's slave to be."

Why decks the maid her glossy hair
With orange-blossoms bright ?
Why binds she round her forehead fair,
That veil of snowy white ?

The fish may 'scape the fisher's net ;
The deer the hunter's dart ;
The toils of love, more deeply set,
Are pitched in woman's heart.

She stands before the altar now ;
Her heart, her hand are given.
Love's rosy hope is on her brow,
And in her breast lies Heaven.

Thus passed the time ; and day by day I grew better in health. The wound in my arm began to heal. I recovered strength, and even thought of some day mounting on horse-back and taking a ride for exercise.

About this time, Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Henry Thornton came together to see me. I was sitting with Bessy in the drawing-room ; but although the two gentlemen came on

business, they did not seem to think her presence any impediment.

“My scheme is now pretty well matured, Sir Richard,” said Mr. Hubbard; “and as I think it may be as well to take our measures at once, I wish to explain it to you. No alien can hold real estate in Virginia; and the real property of any person dying without heirs in this state, is subject to escheat. The legislature can then grant the lands to whom it will; but this is always regulated by a certain vague sense of justice; and those who have been serviceable personal friends to, or nearly connected with, the deceased, can usually obtain the grant, if they apply in proper form and show good cause. You are an alien; and we do not suppose that the object of dear old aunt Bab’s property would induce you to become an American citizen, even if your declaration of such an intention would save it, which is doubtful. But we think that your conveyance, regularly drawn up, of your right,

title, and interest in the property, to a person having as near a connection with the original American proprietor as yourself—indeed nearer—for your claim is peculiarly under your aunt's will—would be conclusive with the legislature against the intrigues of Mr. Robert Thornton and his father."

"Besides," remarked Mr. Henry Thornton bluntly, "we have more influence with the Legislature than he has by a great deal; and that is the principal thing in Virginia and every where else, my good friend Hubbard."

"Perhaps so," said Mr. Hubbard quietly. "But let me explain the whole matter to Sir Richard fully. We do not propose that you should lose the property; but an honorable understanding can be entered into with the party to whom you assign, that he or she, as the case may be, holds it as in trust for you. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly," I replied. "The assignment,

I suppose, is in reality invalid, and only useful as giving a direction to the operations of the Legislature." (Mr. Hubbard nodded his head) "But pray," I continued, for I had already arrived at my own conclusion, "have you fixed upon the person to whom the assignment should be made?"

"We know of no one who fulfils all the conditions," answered Mr. Hubbard, "except Miss Davenport. She is full niece to Colonel Thornton, half niece to Aunt Bab; and though the half blood does not inherit, it gives a good claim. Thus, in fact, she is nearer in every sense than Robert Thornton; and your assignment will, we think, remove every obstacle."

"Besides, she is a girl," observed Mr. Thornton; "and our Virginia Legislature is very fond of girls."

Bessy's face had been in a glow for several minutes; and I never saw her look more lovely.

“I do not understand this,” she observed with marked emphasis. “Richard, I will not take your property from you. Though it is the home of my youth, and I would buy it willingly if it were to be sold, it is yours and I will not have it.”

“Be quiet, my dear, be quiet,” interposed Mr. Hubbard with a kindly smile. “We only want him to give it to you to secure it for him. You can give it back to him again in various different ways, and a great number of valuable things to boot—if you like.”

“Well, well,” returned Bessy, laughing and sitting down, “if that is the case, manage it as you like. I would not have that Robert Thornton possess Beavors for anything I possess myself.”

It may easily be conceived that I consented readily; and as it was judged advisable that the assignment should be made, before any active steps were taken towards the escheat,

Mr. Hubbard promised to bring me the deed next day.

It is strange how dissimilar things connect themselves. This mere matter of business seemed to me to afford an opportunity for doing and saying that to Bessy Davenport to which my mind had been for sometime made up. I was very little doubtful of what her reply would be. I was sure she was not a coquette at heart; and words and looks and acts had told me she was mine. When the two gentlemen were gone, I seated myself beside her, and put my arm over the back of her chair. It was nearly round her waist, but she did not shrink from it.

“Let us talk over this matter, Bessy,” I said quietly; “for there are two or three points which these friends of ours have not considered, as indeed how could they? for they know nothing about them—”

But just at that moment, Mrs. Stringer

entered the room. I never heard of its happening otherwise in my life—and the words, almost spoken, died away upon my lips.

CHAPTER VI.

ACCIDENT, circumstance, fate, fortune, luck, chance, or whatever it may be called, which rules the life of man and keeps him on, or throws him off, the railroad of existence, is certainly, to all appearance, the most wayward, whimsical, unaccountable sort of power that human nature was ever subjected to.

I made up my mind, disappointed in what seemed a fair opportunity, to come to a full explanation with Bessy Davenport on the following day. I was very confident I should

easily find some happy moment when we were alone together to bring about this explanation easily; for of all hideous and detestable things to which man sometimes bows himself, formal declarations of love and proposals of marriage are the most abhorrent to my notions.

I was disappointed in my expectations, however, by a dozen little incidents of the most trifling nature. In the morning before breakfast, it rained; Bessy and the house-maid were both late; and the mulatto girl continued brushing carpets and tables and dusting very ancient and curious Chinese cups and saucers, and opening and shutting windows, and rubbing knobs of doors, until it was breakfast time; and then Mrs. Stringer, for a marvel, came down herself to distribute the good things of life to her guests with her own hands.

Before breakfast was over, Billy Byles appeared; congratulating me upon my recovery, which might be considered complete; and telling us that Mr. Hubbard and Mr.

Thornton and Lucy, and perhaps one of the other girls would be over in half-an-hour with a budget of news and some papers on business. We easily conceived his object in preceding them ; and Bessy laughed at him a little and told Mrs. Stringer she had better have dinner ready for a large party, as it was clear, from Mr. Byles's manner, that their friends were going to stay all day and he with them.

So it proved ; and, what between reading over and signing the deed of gift to Bessy Davenport, and a dozen other matters of no importance, I had not one single moment to speak a word to Bessy during the whole day. She knew not that I was somewhat fretting with impatience ; and, full of life and spirit and gay, good humour, she gave way to every thing that was proposed in the way of amusement.

At length, towards evening, our friends departed ; but Bessy and I were not left alone ; and I knew that my object was hopeless for

the rest of that day, as Bessy would retire when Mrs. Stringer did.

The next day, Mr. Stringer and his sons were to return ; and I saw no resource but to *make* an opportunity, if I could not find one. We had just had some coffee, and I was asking Bessy to sing, when the man-servant, Henry, came in with a packet in his hand which he gave to Miss Davenport, saying—

“Mr. Robert Thornton sends his compliments, Miss Bessy, and says, he has found a number of old letters and papers of importance which belong to you, and therefore he has sent them to you.”

“They can't be very valuable,” said Bessy, “or he would not have sent them. Let us see what they are.”

And, sitting down at the table by the lamp, she opened the packet. Its contents seemed entirely to consist of letters, yellow with age, and somewhat stained with damp. They were all neatly folded, and docketed with what

I supposed to be an abstract of the contents of each. The first two or three, Bessy turned over carelessly, after looking at what was written on the back; but then she came to one which seemed to interest her more; and, opening it, she read it through with a straining eye. The next had still more effect; for I could see her give a start when she read the docket, and her hands trembled violently as she opened the paper. She had not read above ten lines, when, suddenly gathering all the papers together, she started up and ran out of the room.

She was evidently terribly affected, how or why, of course I could not tell; but my uncertainty was soon removed by Mrs. Stringer who had been sitting near her fair guest, and who, with a curiosity which cynics would say was natural to women, had taken a glance from time to time at the papers which lay before Miss Davenport.

“That hateful man, Robert Thornton,” she

said, "will never miss a chance of giving pain; only think of his sending those letters to poor Bessy."

"I see, they have grieved and agitated her," I replied; "but I do not know how."

"Oh, I took a little look from time to time," said Mrs. Stringer, with a laugh; "and I could see what was written on the backs, for it is all in a good, legal-like round-hand. The last one was marked, 'Statement of the death of General Davenport—' that was her father, you know, who was killed in a duel when she was quite a child."

This explanation satisfied me. The occurrence passed as a piece of petty spite on the part of Robert Thornton; but neither I nor Mrs. Stringer, nor Robert Thornton himself, fully knew how painful and terrible was the influence which that unfeeling act of his was to exercise upon the fate of Bessy Davenport and myself. He might guess it in part, but he could not know the whole.

Somewhat more than an hour elapsed before Bessy returned. Her face was very pale and she had evidently been weeping; but her manner at first was calm, and she sat down and took up some woman's work and employed herself listlessly. Poor girl! she had nobody to consult, nobody to confide in. Mrs. Stringer was not a person with whom she could trust the inmost secrets of her heart, and they were all involved at that moment.

What an invaluable thing, is a wise friend, at those times when the thoughts and the feelings and the passions, which work calmly and silently in the human heart, (so long as intellect and reason reign), are cast free from subjection by some of those strong emotions which shake the ruling power upon its throne; and each clamors loudly, like different parties in an excited crowd, drowning the voice of the others, and urging this course or that in the excited impulse of the moment. But Bessy had no such friend; or, at least, the

only one she could have consulted securely, whether wise or not, was shut out from her counsels by emotions of which I then knew nothing.

I tried, as best I could, quietly to cheer her. I strove to lead her mind away from subjects of painful thought; but conversation was evidently an effort to her; and at length she rose, saying to Mrs. Stringer—

“I do not feel well, my dear madam. I think I will go to bed.”

“I will go up with you, my dear,” said Mrs. Stringer, “if Sir Richard will excuse me. Bed is the best place for either head-ache or heart-ache.”

Bessy moved towards the door, at first turning her eyes away from me, without wishing me good night; but the next instant she stopped suddenly, returned, and gave me her hand, saying—

“Good night, Richard, good night.” Her

eyes filled with tears as she spoke, and she ran hastily out of the room.

A vague, confused apprehension of, I know not what, took possession of my mind: her conduct seemed strange to me—stranger than could be explained by the interpretation which Mrs. Stringer had first put upon it. That she was sensitive, full of strong feeling, and, when moved, deeply moved, I was sure; and I could easily conceive that, reading the account of her father's violent death, even though it had occurred many years ago, and she had no personal recollection of him, might affect her greatly. Yet there seemed to me to be something more.

I betook myself speedily to my room; and, as I passed thither, I heard Mrs. Stringer's voice in conversation with Bessy in the chamber opposite. Sleep did not visit me soon; nevertheless, I was awake almost by daylight, and dressed and down stairs, before any one else was up in the house.

It was a beautiful, clear day, and I doubted not, for habit is very potent, that Bessy would take her usual morning walk. The great door of the house, as usual, was unlocked; for few, at that time, thought of locking a door in Virginia; and, going out into the porch, I sat down to wait for her, who I now felt more than ever, was inexpressibly dear to me.

I saw the negroes go out to their work; the cattle driven towards the stream; the long shadows of the trees grow shorter; the sparkling dew dried up from the grass. But Bessy did not come, and I began to be really apprehensive lest the shock should have affected her health. I waited till I was summoned to breakfast, and then I found Mrs. Stringer alone. I was disappointed and agitated; but, concealing my feelings as much as I could, I inquired if she had seen Miss Davenport, and how she was.

“She won’t come down just yet,” answered Mrs. Stringer. “That horrid man has shaken

her nerves desperately. He sent her a long and detailed account of her father's death, she says, written to her Aunt Barbara by the gentleman who was his second. He has filled her mind with dreadful thoughts; and she has hardly been able to sleep all night. I dare say, your having been wounded in a duel so lately, Sir Richard," she added, with a smile, "has given greater effect to the letter."

I could not smile in return; and the morning passed away very heavily till shortly after noon, when Mr. Stringer and his sons returned. They had a great deal to tell of the marvels they had seen, and of the enjoyments of their tour; and I was congratulated warmly by my worthy host on my recovery. In the course of the afternoon, when the whole family were present, Bessy Davenport glided in, pale, and evidently suffering. To any not very watchful eye, no difference would have been perceived in her conduct towards me; but to mine, there was a very great difference indeed. She shook hands

with me kindly, nay warmly ; but a deep sigh, almost like a gasp for breath, accompanied the simple mark of good will. During the evening, her eyes never met mine ; when I spoke to her, she answered without raising them, and I became exceedingly uneasy.

What could be the cause of such a change ? I had done nothing, I had said nothing, that could give her the slightest cause for offence. Could that wretched man have written something in the papers which he sent to poison her mind against me ? I could not believe it ; and yet, in the folly of agitated passion, I almost wished I had shot him dead on the spot when he had stood before me, instead of sparing his miserable life to be the bane of mine. I resolved, however, to have a clear and full explanation. Candour and straightforwardness are nowhere so necessary as in love.

A moment or two after Bessy had retired for the night, I went up into my own room,

telling one of the servants I met in the hall to send my servant up to me. I then sat down and wrote to Bessy, saying :—

“ You cannot be ignorant, dearest Bessy, of my feelings towards you ; and I have flattered myself—perhaps vainly, perhaps foolishly—that they were returned. Since last night, great changes have come over me. Your sadness has infinitely distressed me, and I would fain share your sorrow. But your manner towards me has agitated and alarmed me. I have in vain sought for an opportunity of speaking with you in private to-day. Do not deny it to me to-morrow.

“ By all the many memories that are between us of the last two months, I adjure you, deny me not this favour, nor leave me in uncertainty, which is terrible to me.”

“ There, go to Miss Davenport’s door,” I

said, giving the note to Zed ; “ knock and wait for an answer.”

Of course his absence seemed long ; but at length he returned, bringing me a few words written with a pencil, on a little scrap of paper. They ran thus :—

“ DEAREST RICHARD,

“ You shall have what you desire. I will *find* an opportunity to-morrow ; but do not try to force one. I grieve to have given you pain, and shall always grieve to do so.”

Then came some words which had been carefully scratched out with the pencil. They seemed to me to have been—“ But I *must* do it !” And then she went on :—

“ It will probably be towards evening, when Mrs. Stringer will not let the boys go out. In

the morning I shall not be down, for I am ill and wretched.

“ Your affectionate cousin,

“ BESSY DAVENPORT.”

There was matter both for pain and relief in Bessy's short note. Those sweet first words—“ dearest Richard,”—gave me back at once to full hope and happiness. My love was not unreturned, her affection was not withdrawn from me. I was still dear to her, nay, *dearest*; and Bessy was too frank to write that which she did not mean. Yet what was I to infer from those mysterious words scratched out? If I read them rightly they were—“ But I *must* do it!” Do what? Give me pain? What earthly compulsion could force her to do so? She was free; her hand was at her own disposal. No one could dictate to her; no one could say, “ You shall, or you shall not, wed him.” Then came those last words—“ I

am ill and wretched." What could have rendered her so? Surely not a mere brief account of an event which, however painful, had happened twenty years ago, to one of whom she had no remembrance.

I was puzzled; and by no thought or reflection, could I find any clue to the mystery.

"Well, to-morrow will give me a full explanation," I thought. Yet I continued well nigh half the night reading Bessy's note again and again, and trying in vain to draw from it some indication, however slight, of that which had affected her so deeply.

CHAPTER VII.

I WILL not pause upon the passing of the following day, although its earlier part was, for me, full of that agitated, I might say painful, expectation, which is often more difficult to endure than actual grief or disappointment. The only events of which I have a distinct recollection, were delayed till evening.

Bessy did not appear below till nearly ten o'clock in the morning. She was very pale and greatly subdued in manner; and there

was something in her eyes, whenever they turned towards me, which grieved and alarmed me. It was nothing unkind, nothing cold, nothing indifferent; but a sort of tender, beseeching look as if she would have said—
“Do not look so wretched, Richard. It wrings my heart to make you suffer, but I cannot help it.” Those scratched-out words, “But I *must* do it,” kept vibrating in my ears; and I would have given all I had in the world to hasten the moment of explanation.

Mr. Stringer was in a fuss; he saw there was something wrong, and he knew not what; and, with very questionable tact, he gave a great deal of his company to two people who heartily wished him away. Mrs. Stringer was very quiet, but seemed to be omnipresent; and the boys thought their recent return to their home gave them a right to be exceedingly vociferous and troublesome. It was one of the most miserable days I ever passed in my life.

In the evening, we all assembled in the porch; and once or twice before she did so, I thought Bessy was going to rise; but she hesitated and retained her seat.

At length, however, she started up, saying, "Come, Richard, and take a little walk with me."

"My dear, it is very late," said Mrs. Stringer; "and you have not been well. The sun will soon set."

"Oh, a walk will do me good," answered Bessy, with a touch of the old spirit, "and we shall not be long; besides, my dear Mrs. Stringer, I want to speak with Richard in private." And she laughed, but not gaily; adding, "You know we have got a great deal of important business to transact. Did not Mr. Hubbard tell you that he had made over to me vast possessions—to have and to hold, &c., &c., &c.? Come Richard, get me my veil out of the hall, and give me your arm like a good knight and true."

I went for the veil and cast it over her head. I gave her my arm, and felt her hand tremble violently as she took it.

We walked down the steps in silence, across the grass-plot, through the little peach-orchard, into the field bordered by the wood, through the devious paths of which we had wandered sometime before to escape the companionship of the Rev. Mr. Mc Grubber. I was impatient; and as we entered the field, I said—

“Now, Bessy—”

But she cut me short, murmuring—

“Not yet, Richard, not yet, dear Richard.”

We walked on, and entered a path in the wood; and at the end of about a hundred yards further, found a little open space, with one large, old tree, separated from the rest. The rays of the sinking sun found their way in here over the turf and checkered the green with gold.

Bessy paused here, near the foot of the tree,

raised her eyes to my face, with a look of solemn earnestness and placed her hand in mine, uttering the one simple word—

“Richard.”

We were both terribly agitated; and it seemed to me that she could hardly support herself. Therefore, before I said a word that could increase her emotion, I made her seat herself upon the mossy root, and placed myself beside her.

What I had to say needed no long consideration.

“Bessy,” I ejaculated, holding her hand in mine, “you must have seen my feelings towards you. You must have learned, long ere this, that I love you dearly—most dearly.”

She cast down her eyes, and a slight rosy colour came up into her cheek; but she answered slowly and firmly, “I have, Richard, I have some time ago; I have seen all, known all, just as well as if your tongue had spoken it.”

“Then surely, dearest Bessy,” responded I,

“you could not have given me the encouragement you have, you could not have continued to make yourself all-in-all to me in this world without resolving to make my love happy, and to be all-in-all to me through life.”

“I did resolve it,” answered Bessy, in a sad and solemn tone. “I cast all my former vain notions aside—all the idle, thoughtless, unreasonable determinations of a wild girl—and resolved to give you my hand whenever you should ask it.”

“Then you are mine,” I cried, pressing my lips on hers; “you are mine. I ask it now.”

“Stay, stay, stay Richard,” she cried; “stay till you hear me out, if I have voice and heart to speak. An obstacle has arisen. An unforeseen, insurmountable obstacle. Alas, alas! I can never be your wife.” And she burst into a violent flood of tears.

“But what is it?” I exclaimed. “There may be a thousand means of remedy left.”

“None, none!” she answered. “It is connected with the irrevocable past. It never can be removed, changed, or modified. I might, it is true, become your wife; but I should find wretchedness, instead of happiness; remorse instead of love; *my* misery would make *you* miserable; and in less than six months after I gave you my hand, the never-ceasing reproaches of my own conscience would bring Bessy Davenport to the grave.”

“But what is it?” I cried. “For Heaven’s sake explain!”

“Do not ask me, Richard—do not ask me,” she said; “at least not now. Have pity upon me, have compassion! I dare not dwell upon it. The truth came upon me with a crushing weight—the truth which I never knew till two nights ago, fell upon my heart as if a mountain had been cast upon it, and it has left me very weak. Sometime hence, when we are both calmer—when we can look back upon this time as people who have been asleep look back upon sweet dreams that have

faded away for ever—when the dreadful reality will serve but to strengthen and to tranquillize, though it may chill us—then I will write to you, Richard. Perhaps then you may be the happy husband of another, and can look upon Bessy Davenport as a sister, and compassionate the sorrows she has endured—then I will write to you and tell you all.”

Grief and disappointment are the most selfish feelings upon earth—often the most unjust, the most unreasoning. No language can tell the anguish I had that moment endured, the irritating, fiery, maddening feeling of disappointment. It is my only excuse for the cruelty and unkindness of my next words. There was a struggle even to prevent myself from bursting forth in vehement and angry reproach; but the habit of self-restraint in some degree conquered; and my answer was apparently calm and cold, though all beneath was fiery excitement.

“Bessy,” I said, bitterly, “may you be

happy! Me you have rendered miserable for ever. I have loved you with a truth, and tenderness, and passion, and force of a first and only love—not as a boy loves, but as a man, once and for ever. And you talk to me as being the happy husband of another! Bessy, Bessy, you have never loved, or such a wild, impossible vision could never cross your brain!”

She started on her feet like a fawn frightened from her ferny bed, and gazed at me with a look of agony I shall never forget.

“Oh, how have I deserved this?” she exclaimed. But then recovering herself, she took my hand in one of hers, and raising the other towards Heaven, she said, in a low and earnest voice—“May God above judge my heart, Richard—may He cease to bless, protect, and comfort me—may He never help me at the hour of need, support me in the hour of sorrow, save me in the hour of danger—if I have not loved you as well as woman ever loved

man! What is it makes me miserable now—has broken my heart, crushed my spirit, enfeebled my body?—Loved you!—Oh, God, how I have loved you!”

And casting herself on my bosom, she pressed her lips again and again upon my cheek.

“Bessy, I am wrong, I am wrong,” I said; “forgive me, dearest Bessy. Only confide in me—only put full trust and reliance upon me—let me not be sent blindfold to the sacrifice of every hope of happiness in life. Talk not to me of ever marrying another. I have never loved but once, and never can—”

“Hear me, Richard,” interrupted she, more calmly and gently, putting back the arm I had cast around her. “You yourself shall be the arbiter of our destiny. You yourself shall condemn me, if you will, to death—to a death of remorse and self-reproach. I will be your wife, if you command me; but it must be

sometime hence. When we are both calmer, when we can both look with reasonable eyes upon our relative position to each other—when I can venture to let my mind rest upon the past, of which you are now as ignorant as I was a few days ago—when you can give due weight and have consideration to a woman's feelings, I will write to you, and leave you yourself to decide. You shall say to me in reply—'Bessy be mine, though death be the consequence;' or, 'Bessy, you are right. We must not attempt to pass the barrier which God has placed between us.' But mark me, Richard, and remember, should you view the matter as I do, and see that our marriage is impossible, Bessy Davenport will be to you as another sister. Never, never, so help me God, shall my hand be given to any other! I have loved you, when I thought I could never love any man; and for you, I was ready to cast away every prejudice, every resolution of my

life. My love is yours for ever ; and I should as soon think of breaking a vow, as of allowing one thought of another to cross my mind."

A slight flush covered her face as she spoke ; but strong emotions often bring their own calm with them, and she went on in a manner much more tranquil.

"And, Richard," she said, "I have gone perhaps beyond what maiden modesty would warrant. I have told—I have shewn you—how I love you. But you will not, I think, misunderstand or blame me ; first, because I am, as you know, a wild, untutored girl, accustomed to speak frankly whatever thought, or fancy, or feeling crosses my brain or heart ; and, secondly, because this is an occasion, in which concealment would be wrong to me and wrong to you—when I must tell you, how I love you in order that you may see how terrible is the sacrifice of that love to duty."

"I do not misunderstand you, dear Bessy,"

I answered ; “I will try to be more calm, more reasonable. You have said that I shall be the arbiter. When will you give me the explanations, which will enable me to be so rightly? At present, I can conceive no cause, I can imagine no possible motive, why you should not be my wife ; and I fondly hope and trust that when all is explained, I can remove every doubt and scruple from your mind. But I promise you, my beloved, that if I see a reasonable motive, a just and righteous cause, I will endeavour by no sophistry to persuade you against your better judgment. I will endeavour to think for Bessy Davenport, as I would think for myself, were my mind free and without passion. But, dearest Bessy, make the time short—tell me when you will give the whole explanation.”

“Oh, Richard,” she answered, with a mournful shake of the head, “I would fain give time for both you and myself to think deliberately. I may be wrong in the view I

take at present ; and I am certain you would be wrong if you were to decide now. Well, well, within three months, I will write to you the whole, and enclose you the old letter which I received two nights ago. After you know all, you shall wait a fortnight, a full fortnight, before you decide, and then your decision shall be final. I will say not one word against it ; you shall command, and I will obey."

"My commands shall not be very hard, Bessy," I answered ; "for though you think so very ill of mankind, if I have the slightest knowledge of my own spirit, I would rather ensure your happiness than mine. If we must live as brother and sister, without a dearer tie, so be it."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Richard," she answered ; "those words relieve my mind of a great weight. I see you will have consideration for me."

"I will, indeed," I replied. "But now tell me, beloved, how are we to pass the intermediate time?"

"I have determined," she said, "to go over to my uncle Henry's, and to remain there with him. I have already told my maid to have everything in readiness, and have written for my uncle to come for me to-morrow." She paused for a moment, and then added—"But you will let me see you from time to time, will you not, Richard? There can be no harm in that. We are not parted by inclination, but by fate."

"Assuredly, I will come to see you often," I answered; "for till this is decided, you are still my own Bessy; and although I thought of returning speedily to England, I will not quit this land till our fate is fixed."

She drew a deep sigh, as if there was some relief in the words I spoke, and then she said, suddenly—

“Now let us go back, Richard. It is growing quite dark, and they will send somebody to see after us.”

I drew her arm through mine, and we walked slowly homeward, nearly in silence. We both thought that it was the last solitary walk we should take together for many a day; and the present had been a very eventful one.

But, as usual with human calculations, our conclusions were all wrong. We had another walk to take ere long, and that more eventful still.

CHAPTER VIII.

BESSY seated herself in the hall before entering the drawing-room where we heard many voices and gay laughter going on.

“Go in, Richard, go in,” she said, giving me her hand; “let me recover myself a little. I shall be better soon. The worst is over; I shall join you presently.”

I pressed my lips upon her hand, and went into the drawing-room. Though still anxious—though still grieved—I was not near so much agitated as she was. As she had said,

the worst was over ; and, ever buoyant hope had risen up again speedily in my heart. She had promised to tell me all within the next three months ; and I could not, I would not, believe that any barrier really existed between herself and me, which a little argument, a little persuasion, would not overcome. Woman's mind, I thought, more timid, more delicate than man's, magnified difficulties and dangers, and, sometimes even *created* them where they did not exist.

“ But there can be no obstacle between us,” I said to myself, “ which reason and love cannot overcome.”

In about ten minutes, Bessy joined the rest of the party, and was certainly more cheerful than she had been the night before. The evening passed heavily enough, however ; and about half-past nine, she retired to rest.

Half-an-hour after, the whole party separated, and I proceeded to my own room, not

to sleep, but to meditate. I was anxious to think of every possible obstacle which could lie between Bessy and myself; and, as we are often inclined to do, to lay out plans for removing that of which I had no means of ascertaining the weight or the nature.

When I entered the room, I found the candles lighted, and Zed, in one corner, upon his knees, very busy over something lying on a chair. He did not hear me enter; and, while throwing off my coat and waistcoat, I asked him a little sharply—

“What are you about there, Zed?”

“Only looking up your pistols, master,” said Zed, raising his head.

“Why, you seem to be loading them,” I exclaimed.

“Just loaded the little ones, master; will load the big ones in a minute.”

“Stay, stay. Why are you loading them?” I demanded, “I don’t want them loaded.”

“Oh, always better to have pistols loaded in troublesome times master,” answered the man, earnestly. “Better let me load them.”

There was something in his manner which struck me as strange ; and I replied—

“Come here and speak to me.”

The man hobbled up to the chair where I was sitting, and I fixed my eyes inquiringly on his face.

“Do you know anything,” I said, sternly, “which makes you judge that it would be better for me to have my pistols loaded this night, after they have been so long unloaded?”

“No,” replied the man, firmly.

“I suspect you do,” I rejoined ; “and remember if you *do* know of any evil about to take place, and do not inform me, you will be an accomplice.”

“Master, I do not know anything,” replied Zed ; “but I do not like the looks of things. I will tell you all I do know, and will lay down

my life for you, master, for you have been a very kind master to me. This evening I went out to take a walk all by myself; and, down in the wood out there, I saw a good number of colored gentlemen together—more nor common—and they were not talking loud and laughing, nor poking fun at each other; but they had all got their heads together and were whispering quite low; and Nat Turner was there, and Nelson and Harry and James, and several more, who, at the time of the preaching, I overheard say very wild things. So I say to myself, ‘I’ll go home and load master’s pistols—no knowing what may happen.’”

“Did you see any arms amongst them?” I enquired.

“No, they had no arms,” he answered; “not even sticks; but they had a great big demi-john of some liquor.”

“Most probably they were out upon some frolic,” I suggested, entertaining some slight



suspicion that my good friend Zed had not entirely forgotten the beating he had received in coming from the camp-meeting. "Give me that light jacket," I continued, "and then you can go, Zed. I have got a good deal to do before I can go to bed."

The man did as I bade him, laying the small pistols he had loaded on the table, before he went; and I could hear his step descending, not as usual by the back stair-case, but by the great stairs into the hall. There it seemed to stop and I heard no further, but judged it not at all improbable that Zed had gone to Mr. Stringer's room to communicate his suspicions to that gentleman.

I should have explained before, that the great hall ran straight through the middle of the house, dividing it into two equal parts, and being itself divided by a large, thick door from what was called the pantry hall. On entering from the front of the house, the first

room on the left hand was the drawing-room or parlor as they call it here. Then came a little parlor used as a breakfast-room and then the dining-room. On the opposite side of the hall was, first, Mr. and Mrs. Stringer's bed-room, then a dressing-room, and then, facing the dining-room, another bed-room where the children slept. Mr. Mc Grubber slept at the top of the house in a room next to the school-room. My room was over that of Mr. and Mrs. Stringer; and Bessy's on the opposite side over the dining-room. Thus when Zed went down the great stair-case, though his tread was very heavy, I should lose the sound of his foot if he entered Mr. Stringer's room or the dressing-room.

To say the truth, I did not attach much importance to his information or his fears; and, sitting down at the table, I leaned my head upon my hand and gave myself up to meditation.

“What could be the impediment,” I asked myself, “to my union with Bessy Davenport, which seemed so formidable in her eyes?”

I traced back the history of my family as far as I knew it. I dwelt upon all that I had ever heard even in my childhood's days, which could in any degree account for her scruples or her doubts. But I could find nothing. My mind was too much excited for sleep to approach my eyes; and, many a time, I went over and over the same ground, turning the question before me in every different direction, and only puzzling myself more and more.

Hour passed by after hour; the dull chime of the hall-clock sounded One and Two; and I resolved at length to lie down to rest.

Just, however, as I rose from my chair, I fancied I heard voices speaking in a low tone on the outside of the house; and, approaching the window, I looked out. There was nobody there, and I returned to the table. I had

hardly reached it, when I heard distinctly a window raised. I paused to listen; and then came what seemed to me, a faint, smothered cry.

Snatching up the pistols from the table, I advanced towards the door; but before I could reach it, it was thrown open and Zed appeared. He carried a large key in his hand and his eyes seemed starting from his head.

“Run master, run,” he cried, “down the back-stair-case out through the little hall into the wood. They are murdering all the white people down below!”

“How many are there?” I exclaimed.

“Oh, thirty or more,” answered Zed; “but I have locked the door between the halls, so they can’t get through. Run down the back stair-case, run, master, quick quick!”

Resistance was evidently in vain, and I rushed out of the room, but not to the top of the back stair-case. Something dearer to me than my own life was to be protected;

and, darting across, I threw open Bessy's door and went in, followed by Zed.

For the last two or three nights, she had burnt a light in her room; and, while my faithful servant locked the door behind us, I hurried towards her bed-side. She had started up at the first sound of our coming, and gazed at me with eyes full of terror and surprise.

“The house is attacked by revolted negroes, Bessy,” I exclaimed. “They are murdering every one below. Come quick, come quick! I will protect you with my life.”

She sprang out of bed and was seeking for some clothes, but a piercing shriek rang up from the rooms below, and I caught her hand, saying, “For God's sake come!”

“Run, Missie, run,” cried Zed, “down the back stairs, out into the wood. I will keep them here some time—I hear them coming up-stairs—run, run!”

Half carrying, half leading, I drew her to

the door opening to the little stair-case, making Zed a sign to follow ; but he shook his head, and, just as I passed through the door with Bessy, I heard him say, " Won't hurt me. What's a poor black man's life worth ?"

I hurried Bessy down stairs as fast as possible, feeling tempted, I will admit, to lock the door behind us, for the key was in the lock on the outside, few persons thinking it worth while at that time in Virginia to take what seemed the unnecessary precaution of fastening their doors. But I thought of poor Zed and I refrained.

The pantry-hall was quite vacant and very dark, so that we had to feel our way through ; but, as we passed, I heard voices speaking loudly above, and what seemed to me the blows of an axe upon a door.

At length, we reached the open air of the stable-yard, over which the sinking moon was throwing her pallid light. Before us, at the distance of some sixty or seventy yards, were

two of the women servants flying in terror, and one of them dropped a cloak, which was over her shoulders, made a snatch at it from the ground, but ran on without recovering it on seeing Bessy and myself issuing from the house, doubtless imagining us to be pursuers. I thought it no robbery to take up the cloak, and throw it over my fair companion.

“To the left, Richard, to the left,” she said, “between the two buildings. It will lead us sooner to the wood.”

I hurried on as she directed, and soon entered a path amongst some tall open trees, with greensward beneath, which at the end of five minutes, led us to the outskirts of the forest. We plunged in, and all was darkness round us, so that we were obliged to go more slowly; for though the path continued, it was frequently obstructed by obtruding trees.

“Your feet, dear Bessy,” I said, in a whisper—“you have nothing to protect them.”

“ Yes I have,” she answered, in the same tone, “ my slippers were by the bed-side.”

As she spoke, I heard steps advancing quickly upon the path behind us, at the further end of which was a little break of light, like one of those gaps which we sometimes see in a dark cloud, and I discerned the figure of a man, with what seemed a hatchet in his hand, coming rapidly up.

Throwing my arm round Bessy, I drew her out of the path, and, taking one of the pistols out of my pocket, resolved to wait and see if the man would pass us, before I fired, first because I had no ammunition with me, and secondly because I feared the report might attract attention towards us.

“ Dis way, dis way, they must be up here,” cried a negro’s voice. “ Kill ’em all, kill ’em all !”

I could faintly see him as he rushed forward,

whirling the axe in his hand. I thought he would have passed us; but no: he caught a glimpse of something white in the wood, and stopped short.

“Still, Bessy, still!” I whispered, raising my arm, and aiming deliberately, as well as I could, by the faint light. He took a step forward towards us, and I obtained a clearer view of him. My finger pressed the trigger, and I only heard the ringing report of the pistol and the sound of a heavy fall. There was neither cry nor groan, and I suspect the ball had gone right through his head.

“Now, Bessy,” I said, “the report may bring them hither quickly. Do you know any way that will lead us from the other side of this path?”

“Yes, yes,” she answered; “I will show you. It will take us to what I call the labyrinth. We shall be safe there.”

We hurried on; and I thought she gave a

little start as we came suddenly upon the body of a negro, lying partly on the path and partly in the bushes, with the axe he had carried, thrown full ten feet from him, so that we passed between it and his corpse. She did not quail nor falter, but led me on to the mouth of a little side-path, down which we went.

With many a bend and many a turning, it led us, after more than a mile, into those low woods, intersected by many little byways, in which she and I had passed more than one hour of deep, though very varied, interest. We passed the open space overshadowed by the great old tree, under which she had told me how she loved me; but that she could never be my wife. The sinking moon shone upon the spot now, as the sun had done then. We both remembered the emotions which had now been swallowed up in others; and while her right hand clasped my arm,

her left was extended and lay gently upon mine.

It seemed to say, "Don't you remember, Richard?"

Still we hurried on, however; for I felt that we were yet too near the scene of slaughter to pause in safety there.

"Will not this lead us to the river, Bessy?" I asked.

"No; take to the left," she answered, "and we shall come to the house of Mr. Travis, where we shall be safe, I doubt not."

"I fear, Bessy, the insurrection is general," I replied. "Poor Zed gave me some intimation this evening; but I foolishly treated his warning with too little consideration. However, we must seek some place of shelter, though it will be necessary that we take every precaution to avoid falling into fresh danger. Can we not reach the town?"

"We shall have to pass close by the house,"

she answered. "It would be madness to attempt it to-night. The revolt can hardly be so general as you think."

We walked quickly on for about two or three miles, still keeping within the shelter of the woods, though the path was crossed with roots, and in some places encumbered with triars. I felt Bessy's hand lean more and more heavily on my arm. Grief, anxiety, and terror had weakened her, and I became convinced that she could not go much farther,

"What is the distance to Mr. Travis's house now?" I asked.

"Perhaps three miles," she answered with a sigh.

"Hadn't we better stop here and rest?" I said; "morning will soon arrive, and you cannot walk that distance at present, I am sure."

"A little farther on there is an open space," she answered; "and I recollect there is a bank

that used to be covered with wild flowers and soft grass; and we can sit down there and rest a little, for I am, I confess, very, very weary, dear Richard."

"Let me carry you," I said.

But she would not suffer me, saying—

"Your arm, your arm."

At the end of about a quarter of an hour, we came to the spot she had mentioned. It was, indeed, like a place made for lovers. The moon, though she was below the woods, still spread a soft light over the sky and the grassy bank; and the tall, irregular trees around, waving their wide branches over it, were all distinct, though softened in the half-light. I led her up the bank, and seated her where it seemed driest; then, taking my place by her side, I put my arm fondly round her. For a minute or two she spoke not; but she sighed deeply, and her head sank silently on my bosom.

I was almost afraid she had fainted ; but I soon perceived, by the soft breath upon my cheek, that such was not the case ; and I said—

“ Now, dearest Bessy, take a short sleep ; it will refresh you. I will roll up this jacket, and make a pillow for you.”

“ No, no, I will rest here, with my head upon your shoulder,” she answered. “ I know, Richard, I can trust you as a brother.”

I would not touch her lips, but I pressed mine upon her brow. Then wrapping the cloak tightly round her, without removing my arm from her waist, I leaned gently back against the bank, with her head still resting on my bosom. Then, drawing the undischarged pistol from my pocket, I threw my right arm over her also, ready to fire at the first approach of danger.

I felt Bessy's heart beat against mine, but I was her brother. In two minutes she was

asleep, utterly exhausted; and I kept watch while the last ray of moonlight faded from the sky. Very soon after, the first faint beams of morning began to spread up towards the zenith.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a beautiful night and a beautiful morning, calm and sweet and peaceful; contrasting strangely and painfully with the dreadful scenes which had been enacted within the last few hours.

In our flight from the house, and the long walk we had taken with real dangers on every side, and all those which imagination never fails to supply in moments of agitation and peril, I had had no time for thought.

But now, as I rested here, with Bessy in my

arms, and the tranquil change going on above from night to morning, the mind seemed hurried on with wild rapidity, as if by a runaway horse. Thought thrust upon thought; memories, expectations, fears, hopes, doubts, questions, all trod upon each other's heels; and before one had time to obtain full possession of the ground, it was gone, displaced by another.

What a multitude of incidents had occurred since, a few months before, I had laughingly taken my departure from Norfolk, feeling life and the world to be great jests, and hardly believing in the reality of anything! What a multitude of incidents! I speak not of mere material facts, but of mind and heart facts. What new friends, what new enemies had arisen! What perils, what pains, what hopes, what happiness, what new objects, purposes, desires, had crowded upon me! What new thoughts had entered the brain, what new feelings had been born in the heart! It seemed almost a

life-retrospect—like one of those pageants of past existence, which, I am told, sweep before the eyes of a drowning man in the last expiring blaze of consciousness.

For some time, this great and strange impression—for it was more a general impression than a sequence of ideas—kept possession of my mind; but then I forced my thoughts away, and fixed them upon the more important facts of the present. What had become of Mr. Stringer and his family? Were they all dead, all slaughtered? What had become of poor Zed, who had so heroically risked his own life to secure to me and Bessy a few moments more for escape? Was it to be expected, that in the rage and excitement of the moment, the furious savages, drunk with blood and murder, would spare any one who opposed them of whatever colour he might be?

Then, again—how far had the insurrection spread? With the little information I possessed, it seemed to me that this revolt must have

been long planned and deliberately arranged. I remembered the horrible massacres of St. Domingo; and how silently and secretly the first outbreak of that great and bloody insurrection had been arranged by the negroes—how confidently, carelessly, and securely the planters had reposed on their own strength till their self-reliance was drowned in blood and flames.

That such might be the case in the present instance was clear. Whether it was actually so or not, I had no means of judging; yet I could not help fearing that the insurrection had been very general. The negroes could have no particular motive for attacking the house of Mr. Stringer more than any other—indeed less; for there being more white men in it than in numbers of others in the neighbourhood, the assailants were likely to encounter more vigorous resistance. Mr. Stringer had given no special cause of offence; and in his house was

staying one of the apostles of the abolition party.

The more I thought of the whole, the more probable it seemed to me that the insurrection had been very general. I knew and had seen how rapidly and secretly the negroes communicate with each other—how unaccountably the most trifling piece of news would pass amongst them, from house to house, over a wide space; and, surely, I thought, in a case of such terrible importance as this, the same means of communication must have been brought into operation.

Then came the terrible question—“If such is the case—if revolt and massacre are stalking abroad over the land, where shall I find shelter and safety for this dear girl?”

I had no means of forming a sane opinion. My knowledge of the country was but scanty. I knew, generally, the direction in which the county-town, Jerusalem, lay; but I knew not

how to reach it by the shortest and most secure road ; and the only resolution I could form was, to lay all the conclusions I had arrived at before Bessy when she awoke, and trust to her better knowledge of the people and the district.

While these reflections had been passing through my mind, the faint grey of the morning had brightened into a rosy glow, and the rising sun poured streams of light across the little open space in which we were. There she lay, dear girl, with her head still resting on my bosom, looking still more beautiful, it seemed to me, than ever. I had fancied that one great charm of her countenance was in her eyes ; but now, veiled by the pale lids, with their long black fringes sweeping her cheek, those eyes could add nothing ; yet, how lovely she looked ! A soft glow was upon her cheek ; and, indeed, the rosy light of morning coloured her whole face, while the slightly-parted lips showed the pearly teeth, and her bosom heaved gently and

regularly with the breathing of calm and quiet sleep. I could have lain there and gazed at her for ever.

For more than an hour after sun-rise, it seemed as if fatigue, I might say utter exhaustion, had obliterated all trace of the dreadful scenes we had passed through, and the perilous situation in which we were. It was evident she dreamed not at all; but, at length, she moved a little. A broken word or two came from her lips.

“Oh, Richard!” she said, and then came something that was indistinct; then she spoke again more plainly. “Your father, you know it was your own father—do not, do not press me.”

Then she awoke with a start, and gazed around her wildly. She would have sprung up, but I still held her in my arms, saying—

“Bessy, you forget.”

And, looking into my face for a moment, she seemed to recall the past with sensations which

must have been strangely mingled. First came a look of terror; then a bright smile, and then her whole face and forehead were overspread with a burning blush, and she buried her eyes for a minute or two on my bosom.

I tried to soothe and quiet her, and she was soon conversing with me, anxiously, but calmly, upon the circumstances in which we were placed.

“We had better, in the first instance,” she said, “go on to the house of Mr. Travis. He is so good and excellent a man, so kind to his servants and to all the people around him, that he would be the last to be attacked. Then again, from the edge of the wood, we can see the house quite plainly; and if we perceive anything unusual or that indicates danger, we need not go on.”

“It is too far, however,” I answered, “for you to go on without some refreshment, Bessy. If you will go a little farther amongst the

trees, so as to be hidden from the road, I will seek some wild fruits, such as I have seen growing round, and we will make our breakfast, like two hermits, here. I will not go beyond call."

She had some little hesitation at letting me depart; but we found a place where she could conceal herself completely, and I went on my foraging expedition, which produced some supply, though not a very abundant one. Many of the wild fruits, of which, through this country, there is generally a large quantity, were now nearly over; still, in the shady places, I found some strawberries and raspberries unwithered, and two or three other kinds, looking like plums and cherries, which were fair enough to the eye, though whether they were edible or not, I could not tell. I judged, however, that in her young days, Bessy must have made acquaintance with them; and at the end of about a quarter of an hour, I went back with both my hands loaded. Some I found

were bitter, some poisonous ; but the rest served in some degree to refresh her ; and, as we sat and took our humble fare, the strange situation in which we were placed, seemed to present itself more strongly than ever to her eyes.

“ I can hardly believe all this, Richard,” she said. “ It seems to me like a dream. Are we really living and waking on this earth ? or are we the sport of some strange, mad fancy ? ”

“ The facts are too stern to be disbelieved, dearest girl,” I answered. “ Indeed, I almost dread to think how many dark and terrible realities there may be around us even now.”

“ And yet amidst them all, Richard,” said Bessy, with tears rising in her eyes—what sweet and beautiful things are eyes !—“ how can I ever thank you, not alone for saving my life a second time, but for all the tenderness and brotherly delicacy you have shown me. When I spoke so ill of men, Richard, some

months ago, I did not know there was, in the world, such a man as you."

She wiped the drop of emotion from her cheek, and then added—

"But what are these darker things you apprehend? Those we know are dark enough. I hardly dare to let my mind rest upon them."

I explained to her, as well as I could, the reasons there might be to suppose that the insurrection of the slaves might have been general throughout all that part of Virginia, or even farther; and I dwelt especially upon the difficulties which we might encounter in seeking some place of safety, hoping that her better knowledge of the country might enable her to suggest something, where I, in my ignorance, was at fault.

"I do not think the revolt can have been very general," she said. "St. Domingo, which you mention, was, I believe, in a very different condition from this State. The negroes

were much more numerous there, and the white race were a feeble, inactive, colonial population. They had not the vigour and energy of the free citizens of a republic. You may smile, dear Richard; but you will see that, although this insurrection may have spread farther than I imagined, and many terrible things may happen in the meantime, the gentlemen of Virginia will speedily unite and put it down with a strong hand. However, the only thing for us to do, seems to me to consist in obtaining some information as speedily as possible; and the place where we are most likely to find it, is, I still think, at the house of Mr. Travis. We can reach it in an hour; and it is nearer than any other place. Let us go. I am quite ready now."

' We went on upon our way, conversing in very low tones, and keeping a watchful eye upon the path as far as we could see in advance; but all was peaceful and still around us. The air was soft and balmy; the only

sounds were a few short notes from the birds amongst the trees; the only moving objects—the butterflies, flitting across; or, here and there, a squirrel darting from one side of the path to the other, and running chattering up the trees. How pleasant would that morning's walk have been with one so much beloved, in other times and circumstances!

At length, Bessy paused.

“We are not far from the house,” she said. “That light at the end of the path is coming from the open ground of the plantation. We had better turn aside here, if we can find our way through the bushes, and see if we can discover anything before we approach.”

We soon found a place where we could pass; and, proceeding cautiously, reached the outer edge of the forest ground. The house was before us, not a hundred and fifty yards distant; and beyond it were some of the offices and several negro cabins.

Not a human being was visible, however.

The eye could range over the unfenced fields without a single labourer being seen. No grooms appeared about the stable; no women sitting at the cabin doors; no children playing about before them. The windows of Mr. Travis's house were all closed, and only the door in front was partly open.

"I do not like the appearance of things here, Bessy," I said. "Do you see?"

"Yes," she answered. And I could feel her hand tremble on my arm. "The place looks strangely desolate. Perhaps they have fled at the news of the revolt."

"It may be so," I answered; "but I cannot take you there, Bessy, till I know more. Who can tell what may be in that house? Can you fire a pistol?"

"I dare say I can, Richard," she answered. "But why?"

"Because I will leave this with you," I replied, "and go forward and see what has

occurred there. If I should not come back soon, the only thing for you to do will be to make the best of your way to Jerusalem, by the safest path you can think of. The gentlemen of the place will make that their rallying-point, you may depend upon it."

"Oh, no, no, Richard," she cried; "if you go to death, I will go with you. Indeed, indeed, I cannot stay here alone. I should die of fear for myself and you. I was in terror all the time you were absent this morning."

I saw that it was vain to reason with her; and, making our way out of the wood, we came quietly to the open space cleared around the house. At the same moment a large dog came round from the stable to the front door, raised his head, and began to howl. It was the most melancholy sound I ever heard; still it encouraged me to go on.

As soon as the poor brute saw us, he ran forward, but without barking or any sign of

enmity; and, when he came up, licked my hand, as if he was glad to see a human being.

“We have an ally here, in case of need, Bessy,” I said; and, mounting the steps, I pushed open the half-closed door. All was silent; and in the hall there was no sign of disarray or confusion. Hats and articles of clothing were hanging about as usual in the halls of country houses. Some fishing-rods stood in a corner, and a powder-flask and shot-pouch lay upon a chair. There were no guns, however, in a place where guns seemed once to have stood; and on the floor-cloth was the print of a naked foot stamped in some dark fluid. It seemed to me to be blood.

“They must have fled,” said Bessy, who had not remarked the foot-print. “Everything seems quiet and in order.”

“It may be so,” I answered; “but I have many doubts.”

That mark on the floor-cloth, the half-open

door, the windows closed—all created very terrible suspicions. With the pistol, which remained loaded still in my hand, I pushed open the door of a room on my left. It seemed to be the dining-room, for there was a long mahogany table in the middle, with chairs ranged round it at a little distance. Here also was no sign of disorder, except, indeed, that there was a double-barrelled fowling-piece, still loaded and capped, lying across the table.

“This is very lucky,” I said. “I shall take the liberty of appropriating this, which may serve to defend us in case of need; and may procure us food as we go along, Bessy, should we not be able to make our way to some town or village as soon as we could wish.”

“Oh, Mr. Travis will easily forgive you,” replied Bessy. “But let us make sure that there is nobody lurking in the house; for I think they must have left some of the coloured people behind them, otherwise the door would not have been open.”

“Let me go first,” I said, “and we will examine the rooms on this floor.”

Going out again into the hall, with the gun under my arm, I looked up the stairs and shouted—

“Is there anybody in the house?”

There was no answer. Everything was still and silent. I then turned to the room opposite the dining-room. It was a handsome drawing-room, neatly furnished, with books upon the table, one of them open. There was a door on the left-hand side of the room, opposite to the windows, and Bessy said—

“That is probably Mr. and Mrs. Travis’s bed-room.”

“I will go in and see,” I replied; “but first let me lock this door into the hall, that we may not be attacked from behind.”

Having done so, I moved over towards the other door, begging my fair companion to remain in the parlour while I reconnoitred; for I had a sort of presentiment that I should not

go far without finding something which I would fain hide from her eyes. She followed me close, however; and I opened the door. The light was faint, for there were curtains over the windows; still I could see well enough to induce me instantly to put Bessy gently back with my le't hand, saying—

“Let me go in alone, my beloved. Here are sights not fit for you.”

“Have they not fled?” exclaimed Bessy in a tone of alarm.

“Their spirits are fled,” I answered sadly. “Their bodies are here.”

Entering the room, I partly closed the door; and then, undrawing the curtain, the whole terrible scene was full before me. Lying on the floor by the side of the bed, from which he had evidently started in haste, was Mr. Travis himself, with two terrible hatchet-wounds on the top of his head, one from which it seemed, the weapon had glanced and the other sinking deep into the skull. In the bed

lay his wife, with her brains dashed out and the pillow all soaked in blood. But, more horrible still, on the floor near the foot of the bed, was a little cradle, and from it the wretches had dragged an infant not four months old; and, killing it with blows of their axes, had cast it down near its father's feet.

My blood ran cold. I have seen many a man fall in battle. I have passed over the field and gazed upon the slain; but I never saw any sight which so horrified me as this. When man is arrayed against man in deadly strife, the mind is prepared for scenes of death of every kind; and the hand clenching the sword or the musket, the scattered arms and broken weapons, have all that sort of harmony with the work of the fell destroyer, that they deprive it of part of its terrors.

But here everything was in strange and terrible contrast. The peaceful aspect of domestic life was all around; the lightsome, gay

parlour with its open book ; the instruments of music ; the quiet, shaded bed-room ; the little cradle with its light curtain of rosy silk—all added horror to the sight of violence and blood and death.

I could not stay to contemplate it ; but left the room speedily and closed the door. Bessy threw her arms round me, and hid her eyes and wept.

“ This is but what we might expect to find, my love,” I said. “ But, dearest Bessy, we have other things to think of now than mourning for the dead. We shall be in perfect safety here for a time ; for these blood-thirsty wretches will not return speedily to the scene of their barbarous deeds. I must find you some clothing and some food ; for we cannot tell where we shall have to go, or how long it may be ere we find a place of safety.”

“ Food, Richard !” cried Bessy ; “ I could take nothing now. I do not feel as if I should ever taste food with appetite again ; and,

indeed, I do not think we are so safe here as you believe. Doubtless these savages, as soon as they have made themselves masters of the country round, will return to plunder the houses. Nothing seems to have been touched here. We had better get back to the woods at once."

"They will not come soon," I answered. "In the day-light, they must fight their way; and for some time they will have other things to think of than plunder. We will not stay long, however; but I must have food and clothing for you. I blessed God last night that it was so warm and dry; but another night it may not be so. And who can tell where we may have to lodge this very evening? You stay here, and lock both the doors; keep this pistol with you; I will go and seek for the different things we may need, and be back in a moment or two. I must have more arms if I can find any, and powder and ball, if they are to be had; though, I doubt not, these men

have carried off the greater part of the weapons in the house. Let me be but well armed and I shall not mind half-a-dozen of them. At all events, let me have the means, dear Bessy, of defending you in case of need."

It was with evident reluctance she remained below; but I was afterwards very glad I had succeeded in persuading her; for, in the rooms above, I found two sweet girls, much of her own age, both murdered in the same barbarous manner. I took some of the clothes which I found in the bed-chambers to carry down to my dear companion. It seemed like plundering the dead; but that was no time for false delicacy.

My search through the rest of the house was not quite so successful. Every gun, of which I afterwards found there had been many, had been removed by the atrocious murderers, except the one which I had found in the dining-room. In a small room behind, however, I discovered a brace of very beautiful pistols and

a sword. These I took, as well as the powder-flask and shot-bag that were in the hall; the latter of which was half full of buck-shot. The flask was nearly full of powder; and, with these arms, if attacked, I thought I could make a very good defence. Of food, I could find none in a fit state to carry away, except a packet of biscuits; but these were something in our distressed condition; and I luckily discovered, in the side-board drawer, a hunting-flask, containing some brandy.

With all these various articles gathered together, I returned to Bessy, whom I found standing very nearly where I left her. Then, leaving her for a few moments to dress herself, I went to the half-open door and looked out. I had not been there a minute when, across the further end of the open space, three or four hundred yards distant, I saw a negro pass with a gun upon his shoulder. I drew instantly back, but still continued from behind the door to watch the course he took. He did

not look towards the house, however, but marched on with a sort of exulting step as of one who had done great deeds.

Perhaps it was prejudice, perhaps not; but I could not help thinking he was one of the murderers, rejoicing in the retribution he had inflicted upon those who had deprived him and his race of liberty.

In a few minutes Bessy joined me, and I asked her where the path in the wood led to, in which I had seen the negro disappear.

"That is the way to Jerusalem," she answered—"at least one way. There is another path here at the back of the house, but they soon join."

"Then I fear we must not direct our course thither," I answered. "I have just seen an armed negro pass that way; and, I doubt not, he has others before him. Were he alone he would be soon dealt with; but, in all probability, they have marched to make an attack upon the town."

She seemed very much alarmed ; and asked, in almost a despairing tone—

“ Then where shall we go, Richard ? My uncle Henry’s house lies up in the same direction. Good God ! I hope *they* have not been attacked and murdered too.”

“ I hope not,” I answered.

I could express nothing except hope ; and that, to say the truth, was but feeble. It was exceedingly difficult to determine on what to do. Every course presented dangers ; and to remain where we were was, undoubtedly, very perilous. If the actual murderers did not return, other bands of revolted negroes would, probably, visit the houses that had been attacked, for the purpose of plunder. In the fields and woods we were likely, at some point, to meet with the insurgents ; and it was evident, that when they murdered young girls and infants, they would spare no white person.

Still the woods afforded more means of concealment, and a wider space ; and I was just

about to propose to Bessy to betake ourselves to their shelter, when she suggested that we might find horses in the stable, by which we could reach the high-road, and ride in any direction we might find reason to believe was open. "At all events," she added, "we shall find some white people there to give assistance in case of need."

I caught at the idea eagerly; but we were disappointed. The horses had all been taken away, and not a soul was left in any of the negro cabins. An anxious consultation followed; but the only course we could decide upon was to seek the cover of the woods again, to find out some quiet and concealed spot, and to wait there till the sun set; then, under the veil of night, to make our way, as well as we could, to the county town, where we believed all the gentlemen of the neighbourhood would rendezvous in sufficient force at least to keep the insurgents in check. We took the path at the back of the house, which, at all events,

would carry us some distance on the way we intended to go, and walked on for about two miles, looking behind from time to time, and keeping a vigilant eye on the road before us, which, luckily, was very nearly straight.

“Bessy, dear love, you are tired,” I said, as I felt her lean heavily on my arm. “Let us turn into the wood here, and rest awhile. I neglected to load the arms I procured in the house, and I may as well do it now.”

“I do not think Jerusalem can be more than four miles distant,” she answered; “and I can go a little further, Richard; we had better get as near as we can. Besides, about three quarters of a mile on, this path joins the other, and we can better discover what is going on, if we conceal ourselves just between the two.”

We proceeded on our way for about half a mile farther, when, suddenly, from some distance in front, came the rattling sound of musketry. It seemed but one straggling

volley; but, the moment after, I thought I heard the sound of horses' feet at the gallop.

Catching Bessy up in my arms, I carried her through the underwood, to a spot where I thought we could lie concealed. I set her gently down upon the turf, and, placing myself partly behind a tree, looked out towards the road.

A minute had hardly passed when three negroes, on horse-back, rode by at full speed. I was strangely tempted to give them the two charges out of my gun, but the thought of Bessy restrained me, and I contented myself with listening eagerly to ascertain if others were flying along the road, which I knew must lie upon the right hand. In that direction I could hear no sounds however; and, seating myself by the dear girl's side, I said—

“Three of these villains have just passed right along the path which we came up. They must have had a brush with some

of our friends near the town. This is hopeful, dear girl; for it shows that the gentlemen are rallying in force at Jerusalem, and if we can make our way thither to-night, we shall probably be safe."

"Then the negroes are defeated," she exclaimed, clasping her hands with a look of thankfulness: "they are defeated and flying!"

"Nay," I answered, with a smile, "three are certainly running away; but I fear, dear Bessy, that is no indication of the result of the skirmish. Very few affairs of this kind take place without more than three running away, even of the victorious party. It will be better to stay here, and pursue our way after night-fall. We have shade and a soft turf, and plenty of wild flowers and singing-birds; and if we could but forget the terrible scenes we have just passed through, we might spend a few hours here pleasantly enough, even though I have nothing but biscuits to regale you with."

“I thought, Richard, we had no singing-birds in my country,” said Bessy, with a touch of the old spirit in her tone, though greatly saddened.

“Oh, yes, you have, dearest,” I answered. “I have found one since, which I will still try to cage.”

Oh, the bright light that sometimes breaks through a dark cloud! Gloom, sorrow, fear, had beset us during the whole of the preceding night, and that eventful morning; but every step, every moment, had strengthened the bonds between Bessy’s heart and mine as we went on together in the truest and most touching relation of woman to man—the protected and the protector. The agitation and the danger, too, lent the charm of contrast to the comparative calm and security with which we sat in that sequestered spot uncrossed by any path: and, as we partook of our scanty meal, with my arm supporting her waist, and her shoulder partly resting on my bosom, we both tasted a

kind of happiness, only brightened by the gloom of all around, which is seldom vouchsafed to any in the course of this troublous life.

CHAPTER X.

BESSY and I had time enough to talk over many things; yet no word of love was spoken between us—no reference made to the subjects which had so completely engrossed us not eighteen hours before. She was completely in my power. I might have said what I pleased, exacted what promises I pleased; but I would not take so cruel an advantage of her position. There was something so trusting, too, so confiding, so utterly and entirely reliant in her own conduct, that I should never have

forgiven myself in after years, if I had shown the least want of generosity in deed, or word, or thought towards her in such a situation. Nor, indeed, was it at all necessary to say anything. Her head rested on my bosom; her beautiful eyes looked up confidently in my face; her hand lay clasped in mine. What need of words to speak all that was in our hearts? As old Sterne truly says, "Talking of love, is not making love;" and it was sufficient for us to feel that we did truly love each other.

Two or three hours passed by, and they did not seem long. Everything was still and quiet around us. There was no farther sound of musketry, no galloping of horse. Once or twice I left her for a few minutes to approach as near as was prudent to the one path or the other which were here separated by a belt of wood not more than three hundred yards wide. But nothing could I discover. No sound met my ear; no moving object was to be seen as

far as the trees would let my eye penetrate. I believe—I even then believed—that we might go on in safety.

But, ever self-deceiving, human nature would not let me act upon the belief which was really in my heart. Those hours there with Bessy were so very, very sweet, that surely I may be forgiven for conjuring up imaginary dangers, and forcing myself to believe them real; and summoning prudence and discretion to second the voice of inclination. Dear Bessy, did you not give in to the self-delusion too?

It was very warm in our little sheltered bower; for though the trees kept off the sunshine—the fierce Virginian sunshine—they deprived us of the breeze which we only knew to be blowing by the waving of the tops, and the whispering of the higher leaves as they jostled each other amid the bending boughs.

Traces of fatigue were on Bessy's face; and I coaxed her to go to sleep, persuading her it would give her strength for our onward walk.

It was very pleasant to watch her while she lay with closed eyes ; and when I had been gazing upon her in the early morning, I could not make out what was the especial charm. There must be something, I think, in the aspect of peace and calm—not without life, but living, animated, perfect tranquillity, so harmonious to the latent hopes and expectations of immortality, when all shall be absorbed in the serene and deep sense of God's great goodness, that the contemplation of even a faint and inadequate image of such a state fills the bosom with strange and bewildered admiration.

Bessy needed no great persuasion indeed, for her eyes were very heavy ; and besides the Omnipotent and ever watchful eye, there was another loving wakefulness to watch over her. She leaned upon my shoulder, and her eyes closed. Then, suddenly, she opened them with a start—some memory of danger or of grief crossed the still-waking fancy—and then

the sweet eyes closed again, and she slept profoundly. I could have slumbered too in such dear proximity ; for I also was somewhat weary, and felt less strong than was my wont. But I would not suffer an eye to close while there was danger near my treasure.

An hour, perhaps an hour-and-a-half passed. I could not tell how the day had gone by ; for I had forgotten to wind up my watch, and it had stopped ; but I judged by the aspect of the sky that it must be near four o'clock. Sometimes I had gazed on Bessy as she lay, and thought to myself, how false a forger must nature be if the writing on that lovely face did not speak a noble, sweet, frank spirit below. Then I remembered an old picture in my father's house of the children in the wood, nearly in the same attitude as we lay there, and as innocent of evil thoughts as we were. I smiled at the quaint comparison that wove itself in my mind between those babes and ourselves.

At other times, my eye roved round our little shady resting-place, and my ear was turned to catch any sound that might announce the approach of danger. Two pistols and the gun lay beside me, and the other two pistols in my pocket were in reach of my hand. To say sooth, I had some confidence both in my courage and my dexterity ; and I doubted not that I could give a good account even of a numerous body of assailants.

Yet all was so peaceful that there seemed to me no danger ; and I fondly thought we should reach the county-town that night and find security there. Peril, by custom, loses its fearfulness ; and I could willingly have passed many a day with Bessy in those wild scenes even with all their anxieties, had it not been for her sake. But I felt that she could not bear such excitement long ; therefore I was anxious that it should all come to an end, even though the tediousness, and the dulness, and the oppressiveness of formal society were forced

upon us, instead of the wild, genial freedom of the woods.

About four, however, as my eye rested upon the ground before us towards the junction of the two paths, something seemed to arise through the low bushes at the foot of the trees which rather puzzled me. At first, I thought it proceeded from the early mists of evening. It was like the blue hazy vapour which ascends from the ground at the close of a warm day ; and it lingered and spread out among the shrubs and bushes without rising above a foot or two from the ground. It speedily increased, however ; and, from one particular spot, went up a bluish white cloud, rolling in graceful sweeps up to the tree-tops, and spreading itself in ever-varying circles as it went.

It was evident, at length, that some one had lighted a fire in the wood at no great distance. Now, indeed, there seemed cause for anxiety.

The wind blew from us, towards the spot

whence the smoke arose; so that I could catch no sound of voices even if any were speaking there. Still, that some persons were very near us, was certain; and that they were a party of the revolted negroes, was more than probable.

Various considerations engaged my mind for several moments; but, on the whole, I thought it would be better to wake Bessy, and remove as quietly as possible to some more distant spot. What she had been dreaming of I know not; but it was evidently something alarming; for when I spoke to her, and gently raised her head, she uttered a quick cry of fear. It was very low; but it was sufficient, as the wind then lay, to reach other ears than mine.

I was explaining to her what I had seen and what I thought best to do, and pointing in the direction of the smoke, when I saw the bushes move, perhaps thirty paces in advance.

“Lie down!” I whispered, withdrawing my

arm from around her. "Lie down, and keep quite still, whatever happens. There is somebody coming through the wood. I have the lives of six here beside me, and then I have the sword. I do not think they can be many; and, if not, I am their master."

Bessy obeyed without a word; but put her hand over her eyes as if to shut out more completely the sights which she thought were to follow. I quietly raised the gun which I had re-loaded with buckshot, and, placing it to my shoulder, levelled it at the spot where I had seen the bushes move, resolved not to fire until I could fire effectually.

A moment after, a branch was agitated somewhat nearer and more to the right; and my aim was instantly directed there. Again the same indication showed the person approaching nearer still, and I followed the waving boughs with the gun. At length, a dark face appeared, peeping through the leaves, not more than twelve yards distant; but, luckily,

at the same moment, I perceived the gaudy colours of a printed handkerchief, such as is very commonly worn on the head by the negro women in that district.

A minute after, a voice exclaimed—

“Master, master, put down your gun. I not come to do you any harm. We run away like you.”

I dropped the point of the gun, but still kept it in my hand, watching eagerly the ground in advance lest the woman should be followed by any of the murderous bands that were roving through the country. The bushes seemed all still, however; and, quietly and timidly, she came on as if still fearful of the weapon in my hands. She was a girl of about eighteen or twenty years of age, and a dark mulatto; but well formed, and of a frank, good-humoured countenance.

“Ah, Miss Bessy,” she cried, when she came within six or seven feet of us. “Is that you? You must have had a hard time of it,

I reckon. Oh dear ! oh dear ! that this should ever come to pass ! Why, how did you ever come to get away ? Those nigger-devils have killed every one at Mr. Stringer's, minister and all—him who preached to them so fine. I dare say he wish now he had not told 'em to kill their masters. He little thought he have his own head split with a hatchet."

Bessy had risen and gazed, for a moment, on the speaker as if she did not recollect her, and the girl continued—

"Why, don't you remember Minerva, who lived with Mr. Travis ? Ah, they killed my poor master and missus, and even the poor little baby, Eddy ; and never say one word to the women, but go about murdering in de night ; and so we all go frightened and run away into de woods, for we did not know that our turn might not come next, for dey are all so furious ; and Nat Turner say he is sent by de Lord to kill and to slay, and to 'terminate all on whom he finds de mark. Now who can

tell whether she has got de mark or not? So five of us come away here, and all the rest have gone away, I do not know where, and taken de children wid dem."

While she had been speaking, I had still kept my eyes upon the brush-wood before me, and had satisfied myself that no one followed her; and Bessy, who had been somewhat bewildered at first, both by the news of the danger, and by being suddenly woke from her sleep, now recognized the girl, and said—

"I remember you now, Minerva. You were the child's nurse, were you not? I do not think you would betray us or injure us."

"I would not for my life, Miss Bessy," replied the girl. "I would die to help you, but would do nothing to hurt you."

We Englishmen are not very fond of warm professions, for we rarely make them ourselves, and have no allowance for different customs, blood and temper. Yet the girl's face looked frank and open; and I invited her to sit down

beside us, wishing to extract any information she might possess.

It was not much that she could give ; for, as I think I have elsewhere remarked, there is not a perfect sympathy between the mulatto and the black race. The former are inclined to be somewhat conceited upon their approximation to their masters ; the latter view the mulattoes with a certain degree of contempt and dislike as inheriting a portion of the blood of the slave-holder, without his power or intellect. They often intermarry, it is true ; still this latent sort of aversion prevails ; and you will always hear the negroes speak of the yellow man or the yellow woman with a cold and slighting tone.

On the present occasion, it would seem, many of the mulattoes entertained some apprehension that the vengeance of the negroes would be extended to them on account of the white blood in their veins. This was especially the case amongst the mulatto women ; and Minerva told us, she had only ventured to

hold communication with some of the people of her own colour. From them, she had learned that from thirty to forty white persons had been slaughtered during the preceding night ; that, being attacked totally unprepared, no resistance had been offered, and that the negroes in the morning, in considerable numbers, (swelled doubtlessly by her imagination,) and armed and mounted, had marched upon Jerusalem, intending to sack and burn the town. They had been met upon the road, however, at the distance of about a mile from where we then were, by a body of armed white men who had fired upon, and dispersed them.

But she added what was very important in our eyes, that they had since re-assembled in greater force than ever, and had murdered a party of four white people whom they had met upon the road.

She could not give us any of the particulars ; for she had only heard them from a mulatto man, who had heard them from some-

body else. We must all have had cause to know—sometimes to our cost—how dangerous it is to rely upon current rumours in times of peril and excitement. It seemed to me too, that the girl was inclined to shirk some of my questions. I asked Bessy, therefore, in Italian, which she spoke very well, if the woman was to be relied upon.

“Oh, yes,” she answered; “I have always heard her spoken of as a very good, honest girl, although, doubtless, she, like all the negroes, is inclined to magnify whatever she hears.”

“Were the white men who you say were killed upon the road armed?” I asked, turning to the girl.

“Yes, that they were,” she said; “for the gentleman told me there was a terrible fight. But all the white men were killed, nevertheless; de niggers were too many for them.”

“Can you tell which way the black men went after that?” I enquired.

“No,” she answered; “I know nottin’

about dat ; only dey did not come down here, or we should have heard de horses' feet."

"Three men passed by on horse-back," I observed ; "and the rest may have been on foot."

"Oh, no," she cried, "dey all got horses ; dey take de horses, and de guns, and de gunpowder, wherever dey go. Dey took all ole master's horses after dey murdered dem all. Oh, I wish I knew who it were dat murder de baby, I would tear his heart out."

And a look of fury came into her eyes, that could not well be feigned.

"Dat Nat Turner is de head of it all," she continued. "He tinks himself a prophet ; but I tink him a devil ; for who but a devil would murder poor innocent babes and young children ?"

Here our conversation paused for a moment or two ; and then Bessy inquired the names of the other four women who were with her brown companion. She repeated them seve-

rally, and at the mention of one of them, I could see that Bessy's countenance fell.

"Why, how came you with *her*, Minerva?" she inquired. "I have heard *she* is a very bad woman."

"Ah, well, dat's true," answered the girl; "she *is* a bad woman, Miss Bessy, and beat her own children, and get drunk, and all dat; but then she was master's slave, and she is so nearly white dat all de niggers hate her, and Nat Turner once said he would kill her if she didn't mind. Dat was when she break her husband's head wid de stone bottle—so we could not refuse to take her wid us, for dey would kill her, certain sure."

This seemed a very reasonable account of the matter; but we had no time to consider much farther, for while she was speaking, another mulatto woman, considerably older, whose approach I had not remarked, suddenly appeared in the brake before us, and Bessy

started up with a look of pleasure, exclaiming—

“Ah, Jenny, is that you? I am very glad to see you.”

“Ah, Miss Bessy, Miss Bessy!” cried the woman, taking her in her great fat arms, and giving her a kiss, while the tears ran over her cheeks. “Thank God you have escaped! I thought that noble gentleman would take care of you. And when I went over the house—that terrible house—and all the corpusses lying about, and the poor boys with their brains dashed out, and that Mc Grubber at the top flight of the stairs, all hacked and hewed with the axes, and found your room empty, though the door was all broken to pieces, I did hope you had got away. Yet my heart failed me to think what would become of the dear child.”

“This is the cook at Beavors, Richard,” said Bessy; “she was dear aunt Bab’s cook too.”

“ Oh, I remember I have seen her,” I replied, “ the day we went over and took possession of the house in Mr. Stringer’s absence. Jenny, I am very glad to see you here. But did anything happen to make you quit the house after you had stayed so long ?”

“ Dear, yes sir,” answered the good woman. “ I heard they were killing all the yellow people as well as the white, and I thought it better to get out of the way ; though, afterwards, as I walked along, I called myself a great fool for my pains, and I don’t believe the story now ; I think it’s all a lie. But as I passed by here, I saw smoke in the woods, and heard women’s tongues, and that made me come up. But you must not think, Sir Richard, that all the black people are as bad as Nat Turner and his gang. Only two of all the men at Mr. Stringer’s would join them, and I will take my oath that none of my dear old missus’s servants would lift a hand against a white man after all you did, and got them out of the hands of

the dealer, and had to fight and be wounded to prevent them being taken to Orleans."

I could not help smiling at the curious version she had got of my quarrel with Mr. Robert Thornton; but I found afterwards that the general notion of the poor people was, that their remaining in Virginia had entirely depended upon the result of my duel with that worthy gentleman. If he had killed me, they thought they would have all been sent away at once to a place of which they seemed to have a particular dread. But other considerations pressed strongly for attention; and after musing for a moment, I said—

"I fear that smoke may betray us to some of the wandering parties which may be about. What have they lighted a fire for, Minerva? They cannot want a fire on this hot day."

"Oh, but dey want something to eat," replied the girl; "and old Lou is roasting a rabbit she snared."

"Oh, there is no fear, Sir Richard," said

Jenny. "They have all gone the other way ; besides, they tell me a number of them ran away with buck-shot in their skins, and they'll be a long time before they come back again, I reckon. Why, the road all the way to Jerusalem's quite clear now."

"I wish I could believe it so, Jenny," I answered ; "for I want to take Miss Davenport there as soon as possible. But I understand there are some thirty or forty in the band ; and though I would defend her to the last, I should soon be overpowered by such a number."

"Ay," answered Jenny, "there were sixty of them this morning ; I counted them myself ; but there are not so many now. They have begun to melt away, and there will soon not be twenty of them left together, unless there are others coming up that I don't know about. But you can soon satisfy yourself, Sir Richard ; for if you just walk along, keeping in the inside of the woods, with the sun a little bit to your right, at the end of about half

an hour you will come upon the high road, and if you see no trace of them between this and that, you may be sure that it's all clear. They won't venture on the high road in a hurry again; for the gentlemen are all assembling at the town, and are too many for them. I'll go with you if you like, and show you the way. I'm not afraid. Indeed I should have gone to Jerusalem myself, only it's not pleasant for us poor creatures. The gentlemen take us up because we are black, and the niggers kill us, because they say we are yellow; so what are we to do?"

"Let us go on, Richard," said Bessy. "I do not think there will be much danger."

A moment's thought, however, made me resolve, before I took her with me, to reconnoitre the country in front by myself. It was evident that Jenny's information, like that of the mulatto-girl, Minerva, was merely upon hearsay; and I did not choose to risk the life of one very dear to me upon the strength of

vague rumours. Besides, Bessy had now with her one on whom she could depend, and who, in some respects, might be more serviceable to her than even I could be. Jenny, in all probability, knew all the paths and by-roads in a country in which she had been born and brought up. She knew the customs and ways of the people, and could judge of their movements and their purposes much better than I could do. She was, moreover, a very stout, powerful woman, and did not seem to lack courage or decision—all very serviceable qualities of body and mind in the circumstances wherein we were placed.

“I will go on, dear Bessy,” I said, “and see what I can discover for a mile or so in advance. I will return as soon as I have satisfied myself that the way is clear. In the mean time, you stay here with Jenny till I come back, unless you find some cause for apprehension. In case you are obliged to leave the place, tear up a handkerchief, or this paper in which the

biscuits were wrapped, and drop the pieces on the way. You had better keep these two pistols with you. The sound will reach me a long way, and would, I suspect, frighten these scoundrels more than the shot."

"Oh, give me one of them, Sir Richard," said Jenny. "I'll shoot 'em if they come here, and then break their skulls with the hammer like a cleaver."

"Here is a bigger one, Jenny," I said, giving one of the larger pistols I had found at Mr. Travis's. "You will protect your young mistress, I know, Jenny. Dearest Bessy, you are not afraid to stay till I come back?"

"No," she answered, faintly; and then added, "I would rather go with you, Richard; but I will not embarrass you, and perhaps you judge best, only do not be long, dear Richard, for I shall be fearful for you till you return."

I took a step or two forward; but then my heart smote me for a piece of selfish forgetful-

ness ; and, returning, I enquired of Jenny whether she had seen anything of my poor servant Zed.

“No, I have not, sir,” replied the woman. “Poor old man, I don’t think they would hurt him : he was as black as any of them. Oh, he must certainly be safe ; for I should have found him somewhere lying about if they had killed him. Besides, what should they kill him for?”

I explained to her how he had devoted himself to give Bessy and myself time to escape. But she still retained the same opinion ; asserting that he must have got away, before the door into Bessy’s room, from the corridor, had been broken down. Thus, she forced me to be satisfied.

I walked away again towards the southwest.

CHAPTER XI.

MY progress was somewhat slower than I had anticipated ; for, in many places, the bushes grew very thick, and tangled underwood sometimes prevented the possibility of advancing in a straight line. Occasionally, too, a piece of swampy ground retarded me sadly ; but after having once caught sight of the wider part, or rather wood road, on the right, I always returned to within a few yards of it whenever any impediment forced me to make a circuit, knowing that it must necessarily lead into the

high-road to Jerusalem. I thus exposed myself, it is true, to some danger of being seen.

But we are all, I suppose, curious creatures, in one respect. Whatever may be said of man's selfishness, and by whatsoever strange cause, a sort of transposition of self into another, may be supposed to be brought about, certain it is that he who is the least careful, perhaps reckless, of his own life, becomes wonderfully cautious, and even timid, when one whom he loves is involved in the same peril with himself. I am fully of opinion from the difference of my feelings that day, when Bessy was with me and when I was alone, that no military or naval man should have his wife with him in camp or on ship-board.

I felt, as I walked on, as if I could have routed a whole troop of those insurgent negroes. I had a double-barrelled gun, well charged; a pistol and a sword; and I thought I could answer for the lives of four at least.

Besides, the conviction grew upon me that these men would be easily disheartened. The murder of women and children, I thought, could be no very exhilarating remembrance ; and, whatever may be said of the courage of despair, I am certain that the man who fights with a rope round his neck is sure to fight ill.

However, neither I nor they were put to the test upon the present occasion. All was quiet as I walked along ; and athwart the path wherever I caught sight of it, poured the calm beams of the declining sun unchecked by the shadow of a living thing.

Several times I was tempted to go back by the thought of Bessy, and the fear that some danger might approach her during my absence ; still I believed it better to make sure that the wood, up to the junction of the two roads, was clear, and I walked on.

At length, I came to a spot where, through an opening of the trees, I caught a glimpse of

what seemed a sandy streak running along before me ; and a moment after I heard a voice crying—

“ Hi, hi ! haw, John, haw ! ”

I hurried on with a glad heart, in the thought that I might find some farmer driving his team to the town. When I came within sight, however, I perceived it was only a negro-carter, sitting on a barrel in front of a heavily-laden cart, and driving a team of oxen by his voice along the high-road to the county-town. At first, I was tempted to send a message by him to the sheriff and magistrates ; but, remembering the looseness which besets a negro's tongue, I judged he was more likely to tell it to the first person of his own colour whom he met than to carry it to those for whom it was intended.

He did not perceive me as I stood among the bushes, but went on, now urging his slow beasts on their way, now breaking forth into a beautiful negro-song, called “ The Shocking of

the Corn." The easy indifference with which he went—his apparent unconsciousness of any subject of agitation or alarm, was a great comfort to me. I argued, in the first place, that the high-road was clear of the enemy; and, in the second place, that the insurrection could not have spread very far; for had he been conscious of its existence, instead of sitting there on his barrel, with his chin bent almost down to his knees, he would have been gazing about in every direction with all the exciteable curiosity of a negro.

Satisfied that Bessy could proceed in safety towards Jerusalem, I turned upon my steps and made my way slowly back towards the meeting of the paths. Though my mind was certainly much more at ease, yet I took care to cast my eyes round on every side as far as possible, seeking for any indication that could confirm or impair my sense of security.

I met with nothing, however, till I came to a very narrow path, if path it could be called,

along which a man might make his way on foot, but which seemed scarcely wide enough for any one to pass on horse-back; and yet upon the green-grass which covered it, I saw the print of several horses' hoofs. They might have been there when I passed before, but I had not remarked them, and this sight was the cause of fresh anxiety to me, as great as the sight of the savage's footprint to Robinson Crusoe on his desert island.

The only thing to be done, however, was to hurry forward and rejoin Bessy as soon as possible. I listened for every sound as I went, but I heard nothing. There was no report of fire-arms, no scream or cry, except that of a blue jay as he flew from tree to tree.

At length, I reached the junction of the roads, upon both of which, I saw the marks of horses' hoofs. Whether they were fresh or not, I could not distinguish; for the ground was dry and sandy, and they might very well

have been left, I thought, by horsemen who had passed in the morning.

Pushing my way on through the bushes, I presently came to a little open space not more than a hundred and fifty yards from the angle where the two paths joined ; and, in the midst, I perceived a spot covered with white ashes and a sort of tripod of poles over it, something like those on which our gypsies swing their kettles. This was clearly the place where the mulatto women had been cooking ; but all were now gone, and with a feeling of dread I cannot express, I saw the marks of horses' feet here also.

After one hasty glance around, which afforded no indication to base any conclusion upon, I hurried on towards the spot where I had left the dear girl with the two women, and made my way straight to it, having taken care, as I went, to mark particular trees, so as to guide me on my way back.

I came in sight of the little bank where it

was first seen over the bushes in front. Could I be mistaken? Bessy was not there! Could I have missed the track, and come upon some spot in the mazes of the forest like that where I had left her?

Vain hoping against hope! I broke through the bushes like some wild animal pursued by dogs. I came rapidly on the ground. There could be no more doubt or mistake. There were the fragments of the biscuits of which we had made our scanty meal; there the paper on which they had been wrapped; but not a living soul. Oh! how my heart sank!

But what had become of her? They had not killed her there, that was clear; for no sign of a struggle was visible; and they were not likely to impede their course by dragging a corpse away with them. Yet, I thought I saw upon the ground the traces of men's boots or shoes—large, broad, footmarks, and several of them. I could not be very sure; for the ground was hard, and covered with dry grass.

What I saw, might have been the marks of my own feet, and I stood bewildered with feelings of dread and horror such as I had never known in life before.

I had heard of men losing their presence of mind in dangers and difficulties. I had never known it in my own case; but now my brain whirled. The thought of Bes-y in the hands of those ruffians, seemed to confound—almost to annihilate—every other thought; and I stood for more than one minute, hesitating, undetermined, like a frightened girl.

Reason returned, at length, however. The first thing was to discover some trace whither they had taken her, dead or alive. They must have come from the angles of the roads, that was clear; and, probably, had gone away by the other side. I examined the trees and bushes with anxious care; and, in one part, where they were not very thick, some of the branches seemed bent back, and one twig, I perceived, was broken.

A step or two farther on, a large, old tree stood prominently forward, and on its rugged bark near the root was a small fragment of cotton-stuff in colour resembling that in which the woman Jenny had been dressed. This was the way they had dragged them, I concluded; and I went on with steps which seemed sadly slow to the impatience of my spirit. But I was too much alive to the necessity of watching the most minute circumstances, if I would discover any trace of Bessy, to hurry rashly on.

At length, I came to a place covered thickly with tender wild plants about the height of my knee; and there I could clearly perceive by the crushed stems and leaves that a number of persons must have passed. But here, too, the troop seemed to have separated. The shrubs were beaten down to the left, but very much more to the right; and the party, who had taken the latter course, seemed to have

bent their steps in a direction almost back again.

After a moment's hesitation, I took the right-hand track, and found traces of the band for a considerable distance. At length, they ceased, or, at all events, my eyes could detect them no longer. The party seemed, in fact, to have separated, each man pursuing a course by himself; and I stood anxious and confounded, not knowing which way to take.

I cannot describe the pain of that moment; and now, that it is all over, it is hardly possible to convey to you all the fears, the pangs, the anxieties, that pressed upon my mind, and overloaded my heart. The scene of blood and horror which I had witnessed at the house of Mr. Travis; the blood-dabbled bodies of the two lovely girls who had been torn from their beds and gashed to death with hatchet wounds; the infant, with its brains dashed out upon the floor—were all present to my mind at that moment, and all connected themselves with the

thought of her I loved, and seemed only to illustrate the fate of Bessy Davenport!

I felt as if I should go mad; but there was an eagerness, a fierceness, pervading the wild, tumultuous sensations within me—a spirit, good or evil, which seemed to cry eternally—“Find her! find her, dead or alive! and take vengeance on her murderers, if thine own life be the sacrifice!”

I could not consider accurately, or scan earnestly, which was the way the larger or less bodies had taken; but after a moment of confused and doubtful pause, I plunged headlong amongst the bushes, forcing my way through the tangled laurels, as they are here called, till I came to a more open space, where older trees rose out of the turf with very little undergrowth.

The struggle with the obstacles in my way, certainly had not calmed me; but many a rapid thought had passed through my mind as I forced my path on; and I paused on the more

open ground to try to compose and direct my thoughts.

The sun was now hardly an hour above the horizon. His slanting beams passed in long stripes of light between the boughs of the old trees, and gilded the grass beneath them ; and as I gazed round, I fancied I perceived that upon one somewhat various and circuitous track, every here and there, was a dark little spot of shadow as if something had depressed the turf, and left an indentation which interrupted the long lines of light. It was a man's footmark ; and eagerly I followed it for near a quarter of a mile.

At the end of that distance, I know not what it was made me pause. I have heard of people, who, like some of the inferior animals, have a sense, a strange mysterious impression of the vicinity of some noxious creature, of a snake, a crocodile, a tiger. Such seemed, at that moment, the case with me. I felt as if something loathed and dreaded was near ; and,

slackening my pace, and stepping noiselessly, I advanced through the trees into one of those little open brakes which were frequent in the forest. The moment I did so, my eyes fell upon a tall negro-man lying at the foot of an oak, with a musket by his side. As he lay, his face was turned a little away, and the boughs cast a deep shadow over him; but the sound of my foot-fall, light as it was, made him snatch up his gun, and start upon his feet in a moment; and with a strange feeling of satisfaction, I saw Nat Turner, the leader of revolt before me.

His musket and my gun were instantly levelled, and I heard the cock of the musket click. But, the next instant, the sun shining full on my face, he recognized me, and exclaimed—

“Hold hard, Englishman, hold hard! If you fire, you will never know what you want to know.”

The hope of finding Bessy, was all power-

ful ; and as he still held his musket at his shoulder ; I exclaimed—

“ Ground your arms then, and I will ground mine.”

He obeyed at once, trusting, without hesitation, to my honor. I dropped the gun from my shoulder, and we stood, for a moment or two, gazing upon each other as if waiting to see who would speak the next word.

CHAPTER XII.

“WELL,” I said at length, “what have you to tell me?”

“Sit down there,” he said, in a calm and even commanding tone, “and speak low; for there are more ears near than yours and mine. I do not want to take you at a disadvantage. If we have to fight this thing out, let us fight it out together; though still I am better off than you are; for you love life, I hate it. You have hopes, I have none, but to do the work

upon which I am sent, how much soever I detest it ; and then to quit it for the grave."

As he spoke, he seated himself where he had before been lying, putting his musket carelessly down beside him, as if he had no apprehension that I would take advantage of any negligence on his part. I was more careful ; for what he had said of more ears being near than ours, had roused suspicions ; and placing my gun close to my hand as I seated myself, I drew the pistol from my pocket, and laid it within reach.

"There is no need of such care," he said, in a somewhat sarcastic tone. "The first loud call, the first gun report, will bring plenty of others hither."

"I have *your* life, at all events, at my command," I replied. "You cannot escape me ; and I do not intend you shall, though my own life be lost the moment after."

The man laughed till he showed all his white row of teeth.

“Why, then,” demanded he, “should I tell you anything? But be not too sure, Englishman. I would fain spare your life. You are not one of our oppressors. You have never held a slave. Your countrymen, I hear, have set my countrymen free, wherever they were in bondage; and we have no quarrel with you.”

“Then why,” I exclaimed, thinking of the unhappy Mc Grubber, “did you kill a man who was the advocate of your emancipation, the bold denouncer of your masters? Why did you chop him to pieces with your axes, in Mr. Stringer’s house?”

“Because he did it all for his own selfish purposes,” answered Turner; “because he did it all for the political ends of himself, and his party, not for any love of us or of freedom, or of justice. Do you think we are to be caught by such vain talk? Do you think we never hear from our brethren who have fled to those

Northern states? Do you think they do not send us word that they are worse off there than they are here? That they are treated like dogs, by the very men who pretended to be their friends? That they are excluded from their churches? That to ride in the same carriage with them is an abomination—to shake them by the hand—a defilement? Do you think that we know all these things and then—although all that these preachers and abolitionists say is true, holy as the gospel, just as God himself—do you think, I ask, we give them thanks for what they say, when their acts do not accord with their words, and we know by their deeds that they despise and hate us, although they profess to regard us as brethren, and equal with themselves?”

“Well, well,” I answered, “all these abstruse discussions are vain. I know nothing of your parties in this land. I have nothing to do with them. I act as I think right myself;

and I try to keep my professions and my deeds upon a par——”

“And so you do,” interrupted the man.

“The question now is,” I continued, “what have you to tell me concerning Miss Davenport?”

“You shall hear presently,” he answered. “Last night—a terrible night it was—and nothing but the will of God and His command sustained me in the dreadful work he had appointed me to do——”

“Forbear ! forbear !” I cried, my blood boiling with indignation. “Do not blaspheme the name of the Lord, by giving His word as a sanction for the murder, the dark, silent, assassination of innocent girls and babes.”

“He sent me forth to destroy,” said the man, in a gloomy but still a solemn tone. “He told me—He himself, when like him of old, I lay in a trance, but having my eyes open—when His visible presence was before me, and I heard His voice within my soul—He told me that

Christ had laid down the yoke He had borne so long for me, and that I was to take it up—that Satan and the avenger were loosed and that I was to go forth and destroy, sparing neither age nor sex of the oppressor. Even as He gave commands to the Israelites of old, so gave He commandment unto me, and the command was, to destroy. I have obeyed it to the uttermost, although my heart often quivered when my hand struck firmly. Yet, when we had smitten root and branch in Stringer's house, last night, and I found that Bessy Davenport had escaped, I rejoiced, while all the others were furious, and I said, 'This is God's doing.' For she had been like an angel amongst the people—she had comforted, she had befriended us all. She had sat by my own mother on her death-bed, and had wiped the cold sweat from her brow, and held the cool drink to her lips, and spoke the words of comfort in her ears. She knew no difference between white and black then; and why should I know any differ-

ence now? Yet if I had found her, I would have killed her too, for it was God's command not to spare. But the Lord delivered her. It was His doing and I was grateful."

"Well, well," I cried, somewhat impatiently, "come to the point. It matters little to me what were your motives; they will be judged by yourself and others. All that I know is that you and your companions have murdered in cold blood, women and children who could not wrong you."

"Does not he who kills the serpent tread upon her eggs?" said the man, gloomily. "Do you suppose we would have another race of oppressors grow up when we could nip them in the bud? Even worldly policy would say 'No.' But what have I to do with worldly policy, when I have got God's command in my heart? Did He not tell me to destroy, to smite them hip and thigh, as soon as I saw the appointed sign in the heavens?"

When the sun was darkened at noon-day, I was to commence the work, and not to withdraw my hand until it was accomplished."

"Foolish man!" I exclaimed; "that was only an eclipse, a thing that returns continually at fixed and certain periods by the mere movements of the earth and the moon. But, without argument, what have you to tell me? Give me the information you promised about Miss Davenport."

He mused for a moment with a very gloomy brow; and although I cannot of course tell exactly what were his thoughts, I believe that the idea of the sign in the heavens, on which he laid so much stress, being a mere natural phenomenon, gave him much discomfort. At length, he murmured, as if speaking to himself—

"An eclipse!—I have heard of such things.—No, no, it was the sign—it was the sign.—Well, well," he continued, turning his face to me, "I will tell you. Do you remember

going out to walk with Bessy Davenport, and sitting with her under an old tree, and a long conversation you had with her, and how she wept and told you, though she loved you, she could never be your wife?—I was very near you then, though you did not know it.”

“I did not, indeed,” I replied. “But what of that?”

“Well,” responded Turner, “I was sorry for you, for I am not without a heart, though you may think so. There was something said about a packet of old letters, and she would not tell you what they contained, though in them lay the bar between you and her. Well, when the men had dashed in the door, and we found that she was gone, the others ran about like mad things seeking for her; but I stood still in the room, and I saw a packet of old letters lie upon the table. I took it up. It is the only thing, I have ever taken, except horses and arms; for I do not rob or steal; but I said to myself—‘If ever I see that young English-

man again, he shall see this, and know the truth. Every man has a right to know the truth regarding his own fate.' Here it is, you can take it."

Without rising, he drew the papers from his pocket, and held them forth to me.

I rose hastily, and incautiously approached him without my arms. He gave me the paper; but at the same moment some evil spirit seemed to come over him, for his eyes rolled wildly in his head, and he murmured in a low, guttural tone—

"Now, I could kill you."

"Do not be too sure of that," I answered, retreating.

"Fear not, fear not," he cried. "It is gone. It is a temptation, but it is over. It is pleasant to see the red blood of our enemies, and when we have seen it, we like to see more, and it becomes a thirst; but it is over."

I seated myself by my arms again, and put the papers in my pocket.

“As to this packet,” I said, “I thank you for it, and will give it to Miss Davenport as soon as I find her. You mistake me, however, if you imagine I will read a word of it before I give it to her. No man of honour would do so, even if he knew his happiness for life depended on it. Now, therefore, tell me, where she is? What have you and your people done with her? for I gather from your words that you have not injured her.”

He gazed at me for a moment with a fixed stare, and then asked—

“Do you not know where she is?”

“No,” I answered; “but you must know; for you and your people passed over the very spot where I left her, not five hundred yards from this place.”

He was silent, for a moment or two, and then answered, coldly—

“If you do not know, neither do I.”

There was something almost sneering in his tone; and, starting up with my weapons in my hand, I exclaimed—

“Turner, you are telling me a lie.”

“A lie!” he cried, fiercely, rising likewise; “a lie! and that to me, the destroying messenger of God, commissioned to bring down the high, and to raise up the lowly—to me, who never told anything but truth in all my life!”

“Ay,” I answered, angrily, for I felt quite sure he was deceiving me. “You are telling me a lie; and if you do not instantly let me know what has become of Miss Davenport, I will send the charge of this gun through your heart.”

He gave a low whistle, and then a laugh; and I had hardly time to raise the gun to my shoulder, before three stout negroes were by his side, each with a musket in his hand.

These were somewhat fearful odds; but

there was no escape, and I made up my mind instantly. They might hit, or they might miss me; but I felt very sure that before I fell, I would have two of their lives. The right-hand barrel of my gun for Turner himself; the left-hand barrel for the man next to him: such was the calculation, and then, if I still survived, I had the sword and the pistol left.

Long deliberation under such circumstances is neither possible nor necessary. Both hammers were up, my finger was on the trigger, murderers were before, and the next instant I should have fired at any risk, and at any odds.

But just at that moment, I heard a rushing, rustling sort of sound, close upon my right hand; and, afraid of being taken on the flank, I paused and turned my head a little to see who was coming. At the same moment, a tall, stalwart black man standing on the right of Nat Turner fired his musket, and I

felt the ball go through my hair, and slightly graze my temple.

“That is one shot lost,” I said to myself, drawing back towards the great tree, and so covering my right side. “He shall not have time to load again.”

But before I could discharge my gun, the space between me and my adversaries, was occupied by two figures which I recognized, indeed, but not quite distinctly in the excitement of the moment, and the somewhat waning light.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Hold, Nelson, hold !” cried Nat Turner, in a loud tone. “Why do you fire before I give the word ? By the Lord, you will bring them all upon us. Do you not know they are close at hand ?”

These words were spoken before the fresh actors had appeared upon the scene, and just as the man had pulled the trigger ; but the next instant, an old negro, with a snow-white

head, rushed in between me and the others, and holding wide his arms, exclaimed—

“Forbear, madmen, forbear! Nathaniel, Nathaniel, wretched dupe of your own superstition, I command you, in the name of the Lord, to forbear! Fly, fly, while the means of escape are left you! Get you down to the coast and away—anywhere, by any means; for destruction is dogging you close, and the avenger of blood is behind you. Poor, misguided, self-sufficient creature, for whom the word of Jesus was not sufficient—escape for penitence and submission; and may God have mercy upon you for the bloody deeds you have done!”

As he spoke, I more fully recognized the excellent black preacher, uncle Jack; but, at the same moment, the man who had come with him, approached me, and pulled my arm; and, turning round, I saw my faithful Zed.

“Come away, master, come away,” he said; “they not hurt him; they dare not hurt him.

Come away. A great number of 'em scattered all about. Let us get to Dr. Blunt's as fast as we can."

"Here, take this pistol," I said, "and make sure of a good aim on that man to the extreme left. I will take care of the other two. I will not stir one step, till I hear what they have done with Miss Davenport. Steady the pistol against that tree, and take care not to miss."

"Oh, Miss Bessy quite safe," cried Zed; "she gone to Dr. Blunt's too. Come away, master, come away, or we shall have more upon us."

While these words had been spoken between him and me, more conversation had gone on which I did not hear between the good preacher and the revolted negroes. His words seemed to have some effect. When I looked round, their muskets were no longer raised; but a dull, gloomy look was about them which augured not well, and I did not choose to leave

the old man to their mercy; for I had remarked that they are hard and even cruel to each other when they have the power.

Touching the preacher's arm, I said, aloud—

“Come away, sir, come away. I could take two of these men's lives, perhaps more; for each barrel of this gun is loaded with large buck-shot, which would scatter and kill on either side; but I do not choose to do so. Go on with Zed; I will bring up the rear, and if they press too close upon us, will fire right in their faces.”

While I was still speaking, two more of the armed insurgents came up, and gathered round Nat Turner, gesticulating and jabbering in a low tone. Taking advantage of their inactivity, we made our retreat through the bushes, keeping close together, Zed leading the way.

From time to time, I turned my head, looked round, and listened; but I could per-

ceive no sign of any one following me, for a hundred, or a hundred and fifty yards.

At length, however, I heard a rustling in the bushes behind, and I said—

“Zed, they are pursuing us. Get into the broad path as soon as possible, where we may have a fair sight of them. Here, take this powder-flask and shot-bag. If I have occasion to fire both barrels, give me the pistol instantly ; then take the gun and re-charge it as rapidly as possible. You will have time ; for each shot will throw them into confusion.”

“Oh, Sir Richard, forbear, if it be possible !” said the preacher.

“I will,” I replied ; “but it is necessary to be prepared, my good friend. If we are to die, let us sell our lives dearly. At all events, so to resolve is our best chance of safety ; for even one man who knows what he is about, can do much against an undisciplined rebel like that.”

Three minutes more brought us into the

wide path, which looked cool and calm, and refreshing in the fading light; but a sound behind made me turn my head ere we had gone a hundred and fifty yards; and I saw the dark forms of the pursuers pouring out of the wood, now at least ten or twelve in number, I instantly raised my gun, and shouted —

“Keep back, or I will fire upon you!”

Courage and cowardice are very curious things. I have always remarked, as a general rule, to which there may be some exceptions, that those who show themselves fierce and sanguinary, when there is slight or no resistance, are easily cowed by determination and a bold bearing. The very raising of the gun to my shoulder, though at too great a distance for buckshot to have been very efficacious, made the foremost man halt and recoil upon those behind; and two or three slipped in amongst the trees on either side of the path to be out of the line of fire.

On we hurried as soon as they were brought to a check ; and though more than once I was obliged to face about, for they continued to gain upon us on account of the old man's inability to walk fast, yet the raising of the gun had always the same effect as at first. At length, we began to see the brighter light streaming in at the end of the path from the open fields of the plantations of Mr. Travis and Dr. Blunt.

Our pursuers were now within about seventy yards ; and I hoped as they saw us approach the cleared ground, they would cease to follow us, especially as their leader had not shown himself ill-disposed towards myself. But, on the contrary, when we were within twenty yards of the edge of the wood, they hastened their advance to a run, and one or two of them raised their muskets.

It was no time for hesitation ; and I fired the right-hand barrel straight in amongst them.

It was a fair range where the shot would scatter, but not lose much of its force; and I saw two of them instantly drop.

“Oh, God!” cried the old creature, “that man should be forced so to shed man’s blood!”

“Hurry on—hurry on!” I exclaimed.

At the same moment, two or three musket-shots came dropping round us, but without taking effect on any one; and in another minute we were on the open ground.

Our situation was, perhaps, more dangerous than ever at this moment; for we were in a field of tall Indian corn, not yet gathered in; and had they possessed the habits and skill of the Indians, their numbers were sufficient to have surrounded us completely by creeping, unseen, through the long stalks. But, turning to observe their motions, I saw a number of them appear at the mouth of the path, pause and observe us for a minute or two, and then

retreat into the wood, as if afraid of showing themselves in the open fields.

“Ay, ay,” said Zed, “dey know the white men have been about them, and dey dare n’t come on. Dey would have killed you long ago, master, if dey had not thought Colonel Halliday was near, and been afraid to make a noise of firing. I ’spose those fellows who came up last told them he had gone on; but how de deuce dey ’scaped him I don’t know. Oh, dey won’t come out; dey be afraid he too near still—dam cunning, dam cunning.”

Nevertheless, I continued to watch the edge of the wood from time to time, till we came to a wide stubble-field where the view was clear on every side. Then, holding out my hand to Zed, I said—

“Well, my good friend, I have now time to say I am heartily glad to see you safe and well. My mind has been much troubled about you since we last met.”

“Oh, tank you, master, tank you,” said Zed,

taking my hand and shaking it quite friendly ;
“ quite well, tank you ; how you been all dis
time ?”

“ As well as might be,” I replied ; “ but I
have a good many questions to ask you. First,
however, tell me where we had better direct
our steps to now ?”

“ Oh, Dr. Blunt’s,” answered the good man.
“ And de niggers all good and true. We shall
be quite safe there. But what you want to
know, master ?”

“ First,” I said, “ how you got out of that
dreadful situation in which we left you at poor
Mr. Stringer’s ?”

The man laughed ; for people of his com-
plexion are true disciples of Democritus, laugh-
ing at everything, however serious.

“ Oh, I got out very well in the end,
master,” he said, “ though I did think at one
time I should have been killed. When first
they came to the door, I made a noise in the
room to make them think Miss Bessy was still

there, for fear they should take it into their noddles to run round to the back stair-case and cut you off. But when they began to hammer on the door with their hatchets, I went to the other door and listened, and hearing you open the outer-door of the pantry-hall, I said to myself, 'They are safe!' Then I halloed out quite loud, 'She's not here, she's got away, up to some of the rooms at the top. I've come round the back way, but she's gone.' Then I told them to stop their hammering, and I would open the door for them. But they went on and crushed it in; and then those vagabonds, Hark and Will—they are the worst niggers of them all—got me by the throat and asked me how I came in there? So I told them I came the back-way; and then they vowed I had helped her away, and Hark lifted up his hatchet to split my skull. He would have found it a pretty hard one; for once de horse threw me down a bank thirty feet, and I fell on the top of my head among the stones. That did not

break it, and I think it would have taken two or three good knocks to get inside. But just as Master Hark was going to try, Nat Turner came up, with a gun in his hand, and he caught the other gentleman's arm, and said, 'Let the man alone. The first man who sheds a drop of our own blood, I'll shoot him dead. Do you think if we get to killing each other, we shall ever get the better of the whites?' Then Hark said, 'That in that case, I must come along with them, and shed some white blood, too,' and then I couldn't go back. But I told them, I couldn't keep up with them all along of my game leg, which makes me hobble so, and then they said, they would put me on a horse."

"And how did you get away in the end?" demanded I.

"Why, I thought at first they had trapped me," answered Zed. "But very soon they heard something stirring up stairs, and they all rushed up together to kill that long Yankee

man, who preached to them at the meeting. Lord, how he did pray for his life, to be sure ! And what a screech he gave when the first of them struck him ! But while they were murdering the poor creature, I sneaked down stairs and opened the door between the two halls, for I had got the key with me, and locked it on the other side, and went away out behind the stables. I wouldn't go to the stables, master, for they were sure to go there themselves after the horses ; but I got under a thick laurel bush, and curled myself up, just like Mr. Stringer's large, black dog used to do in the porch—he ! he ! he ! There I lay snug, and I heard them come to the stables and take out the horses, and turn over the hay and straw to see that there was nobody hidden there, and I heard Hark and Will laughing quite loud, and talking about the Yankee minister. One said, 'He has preached his last preaching;' and t'other said, 'He has screamed his last screaming too; and as he sees we have gone the way

he taught us, he ought to be content.' And then they laughed again quite loud."

My blood ran cold at the horrible levity which Zed depicted; but I could not help believing, from all I had seen myself, that his picture was a very true one; for there is a sanguinary mirth, as well as a sanguinary fierceness. Nothing like real earnestness of purpose and steadfast determination seemed to exist in any of the revolted negroes, excepting Nat Turner. In all the rest, everything was impulse—the impulse to slay, the impulse to laugh, the impulse to hack their victim with unnecessary wounds. Poor creatures! in their state of ignorance, and almost brutality, they seemed a combination of the child and the wild beast, with the levity and thoughtlessness of the one, and the strength of the other.

"I do believe," I said, after musing for a moment or two, "that this man, Nat Turner, is of a better disposition than the rest, and might,

had his mind been well directed, have become a good and beneficent person."

Zed shook his head, and responded—

"Don't think so, master. He is dam cunning, that's all."

"Why, he saved your life, Zed," I answered; "and at first he showed no inclination to injure me."

"Ay, ay," answered Zed, "that's all his cunning. He saved my life, because he knew it would not do for black folks to kill black folks; and he would not fire at you, because he knew that the white people were about, and he did not know how near they were. He would have shot you soon enough, if he had not been afraid of the report of the gun. Why, he was the very first to run up and kill Mc Grubber, although he always pretended to be great friends with him."

"I am hopeless of that man, sir," said uncle Jack, who had hitherto remained silent. "I

had once great expectations in regard to him, and, perhaps, my opinion might not have changed, even in consequence of the revolt and the massacre of white men ; for he has peculiar notions regarding himself, is extremely superstitious, and believes he has a right to shake off what he calls the yoke of the oppressor. But the man who can murder in cold blood young girls and innocent babes, is a villain beyond all hope. Here we are, however, approaching the house of Dr. Blunt.—Hold ! Let us take care ; there is a man pointing a musket at us from the window. He thinks we are some of the insurgents.”

“ Keep back then,” I said ; “ I will go forward. There is light enough for them to see me.” And, advancing before the rest, I waved my hand, exclaiming—

“ Do not fire, do not fire. We are friends.”

“ Who are you ? What are you ?” cried a boy’s voice ; for I could now perceive that the

musketeer could not be above thirteen or fourteen years of age. "Father, father," he added, calling to some one within the house, "here are three men coming, who declare they are friends."

"My name," I said, "is Sir Richard Conway, whom you may have heard of. One of the two men behind me is uncle Jack, the preacher; the other, my own servant, who saved my life when the murderers attacked Mr. Stringer's house."

By this time two or three other persons had appeared at different windows, and one of them exclaimed—

"Oh, welcome, welcome Sir Richard. We will open the door and let you in. We are here as it were, in a beleaguered fortress, and shall be glad of your military experience and advice. Stay a minute and we will give you admission."

CHAPTER XIV.

BOLTS and bars, which I should think, had not been used for many a long year before, were removed from the door of Doctor Blunt's house, apparently with some difficulty, for I heard a good deal of thumping within before I obtained admittance. I myself was gladly welcomed; but there was some hesitation about my companions—not much, indeed, in the case of uncle Jack, of whom the rumour had already spread, that he was endeavouring, even at the risk of his own life, to appease an insurrection

which he knew to be hopeless, and which could only have a course of barbarous massacre, and end in the bloody tragedy of legal execution.

My word given for Zed, and my assurance that he had saved my life in the massacre at Mr. Stringer's, succeeded at last in obtaining admission for him also; though much whispered discussion took place amongst some of the gentlemen at the door, of which I could hear some part.

"Why, we have four negroes already in the house," said one.

"Those two will make six, and there are but seven of us in all," added another.

"You have left out Sir Richard and the boy; and let me tell you the latter is as good as any of us," replied the first speaker. "But they only make nine; and what with six negroes in the house, and thirty or forty outside, we might have hard work of it."

“But if Sir Richard passes his word for the man,” said a third, “we may be quite sure of him.”

“I am quite willing to do that,” I interposed; “he has saved my life at the peril of his own; and, whatever happens, I am sure he will be found on our side.”

At that moment a stout, broad-built, middle-aged man, with a somewhat stern countenance, appeared from some room, apparently at the back of the house, accompanied by no other than my friend Billy Byles. And myself, and the stranger, who was the owner of the plantation, were introduced to each other with the usual words—

“Doctor Blunt, Sir Richard Conway.”

“Sir Richard, I am glad to see you,” said Doctor Blunt, in a courteous tone. Then turning to the others, he added, “Admit the man, admit the man. If Sir Richard pledges his word for him, he is quite sure. Now, Sir Richard, permit me to speak with you for a

few minutes. You are in the British army, and have seen some service."

"Four or five campaigns," I replied; "and amongst people barbarous enough, though rather more civilized than these."

"Well, sir," continued the doctor, with a tone in which there was some pomposity and a little excitement, "you shall tell us what you think of our plan of defence. We are certain to be attacked to-night; for this is the only house in the neighbourhood, which the villains have not assailed. They waited for greater numbers; for they knew that they would meet with resistance here. Pray come into the parlour with me, sir, and we will talk the matter over."

I followed him, while Billy Byles remained a few moments to speak a few words with his old acquaintance, Zed; and although I was most anxious to see Bessy, and to hear all that had befallen her since we parted, the doctor was so full of the perilous conjuncture which

he apprehended, that, in common politeness, I was obliged to delay the inquiries I meditated.

“Now, Sir Richard,” he said, closing the door; “you will see that we have two windows in this room facing the orchard, and two in the room similar to this on the opposite side of the hall. The back of the house we have barricaded; fastened up all the windows; put up all the shutters; and only left a little look-out as it were, where some one can be placed to give timely information if the enemy approaches that side, which I do not believe to be likely. Our precautions, however, will give us time to prepare, in case the attack should take place there. Now that you are with us, we have nine men in all, including my son Simon, and we have plenty of arms and ammunition. I propose to place two men at each window, and to station one at the little look-out at the back, to insure us from attack on that side, and have

in each room a negro on whom we can depend, to hand us fresh arms and ammunition."

He entered into a good many more details, showing the means of communication from room to room, in case some advantage should be gained at any particular point, and seemed altogether to have a very tolerable notion of defending his premises against a superior body of assailants. He was very minute in his details, however, and I wished to heaven he would bring his long statements to an end; for, although I was by no means insensible to the necessity of preparation and forethought, I was thinking of Bessy Davenport all the time, and paid, I am afraid, little attention to various arrangements of which he thought a great deal, but which, to a man accustomed to such things, were mere matters of child's play.

"Now, Sir Richard," he said, in conclusion, "such are my arrangements. Have you any

suggestions to make? I shall defer of course to your military knowledge and experience."

I was quite sure he would defer with very great unwillingness, and that his plans must be touched with considerable delicacy. I therefore replied—

"Your arrangements seem to me to be admirable, Doctor Blunt; and I do not see anything that requires alteration, unless, indeed you should judge that it would be better to defend the floor above this. You have here very stout shutters and bars. You could place mattresses across the lower part of the windows, up-stairs, so as to leave nothing but the heads of your defenders exposed. You are well aware, I know, that an aim upwards, by inexperienced marksmen, is never so certain as an aim down, or on a level. They are always sure to fire either too high or too low; and even if they were to get into the house, we should have the opportunity of firing upon

them down the stairs, while we were pretty nearly under cover."

"Why, Sir Richard," he said, "I think myself, that, considering ——"

I saw he was getting up objections in his mind to any other plan than his own; but, luckily, he was given farther time for reflection by the entrance of Billy Byles, bringing Zed with him.

"Zed, tells me, Sir Richard," cried my good second, "that you have had a brush with these fellows yourself just now. Let us hear all about it. But first tell us what you think of our arrangements for giving the rascals a hammering if they come here."

"Oh, I think they are excellent," I replied. "I have not the slightest doubt we shall repulse them with great loss."

"I have been thinking," said Doctor Blunt, before Mr. Byles could reply, "and, indeed, Sir Richard judges so too, that it would be

better to barricade these windows down below, and make our defence from above. What is your opinion, Byles? You see we should have greater command of the approaches; would be more under cover; and, even if they broke in, could better defend the stair-case, when we were already at the top."

I had not the slightest objection to his appropriating my view, so that he adopted it; and was very glad to hear Billy Byles approve highly of the arrangements.

"But let us hear, Sir Richard," he said, "what you think of the numbers of these people. Zed says they are about twenty."

"Oh, no," I answered; "his eyes magnify. I could count no more than twelve, and two of those I shot. Whether they are dangerously hurt I cannot tell; for my gun was only loaded with buckshot, and the distance must have been nearly sixty yards. They fell over at once, however, as if they had been pretty hard hit."

“You don’t often miss your aim, I fancy,” said Billy Byles, with a laugh, for he was just as gay and unconcerned as ever; “but if there are only ten or twelve of these fellows, we have no great cause for alarm, for we could lick them out of the field with our horse-whips.”

“You must not *depend* upon their being in such petty numbers,” I replied. “Doubtless, they will increase considerably as night comes on; for they were evidently afraid of showing themselves beyond the edge of the woods in day-light; and their plan will be to attack unexpectedly in the night, till they can muster a much larger force than they have at present.”

“That is our great advantage,” answered Billy Byles. “We are not afraid of showing ourselves in the day-light, and hunting them down wherever we can find them. When I was at Jerusalem three or four hours ago, the gentlemen mustered one hundred and fifty

strong ; and the dragoons were coming in very rapidly ; while parties were spreading all over the country to clear the woods of these villains. I should not wonder if they did not come here at all."

"I differ with you," I replied, seizing what I considered a favourable opportunity to lead to the subject of which I most wished to speak. "I agree with Doctor Blunt in thinking they will attack this house certainly to-night, especially as they know there are so many ladies in it."

"Ladies ! my dear Sir Richard," exclaimed Doctor Blunt ; "there are no ladies here. The only one who was here, I sent away this morning."

"Why, I heard that Miss Davenport was here," I exclaimed, with a degree of alarm which all must have perceived. Dr. Blunt gazed upon me, and Billy Byles turned his eyes from him to me with a look of doubt, and, I must say, of great apprehension also.

“Why, did she not escape from Mr. Stringer’s with you?” exclaimed the latter at length. “We all heard so.”

“She did,” I answered; “but I left her for a short time in the wood, while I went to see if the road to Jerusalem was clear. When I came back she was gone, and I was told, shortly after, she was come hither.”

“Poor Bessy!” ejaculated Billy Byles, in a tone of deep feeling; and I turned my eyes sternly upon Zed.

I could see the old man was shaking in every limb; and the moment my look fell upon him, he dropped upon his knees.

“Pardon, master, pardon!” he cried. “I only told you so, to get you away; because you would stop to fight with four men with muskets, and you, nobody but yourself. What good could you do Miss Bessy, getting yourself killed?”

I could not speak for a moment or two, and I shook violently, under exhaustion, anger,

and the sudden and terrible disappointment I had met with. The man's words crushed out all my hopes, revived all my fears and anxieties—nay, almost drove me to despair. My thoughts were all in confusion; my brain seemed to whirl. Where was she? What had become of her? Was she in the hands of those terrible men? or was she wandering about in the woods, likely to perish without any one to aid or help her? Or, if she had fled at the approach of the party I had seen, was she not sure to fall into the hands of some other band of murderers?

“You are ill, Sir Richard,” said Billy Byles. “Get him a glass of brandy. I can easily conceive what you feel. I know if Lou had been left in such a situation, I should be just as bad. Zed, you rascal, you ought to be licked.”

“Well, perhaps I ought, Master Byles,” said Zed, still upon his knees; “but I did it for the best.”

“Damn the best!” exclaimed Byles. “It is always the worst thing in the world.”

“Oh, master, forgive me,” cried Zed. “Either beat me or forgive me!”

“Leave the room,” I said, with a gasp; for I felt I could hardly draw my breath. “I cannot, I will not, speak to you now”

“Here, take this brandy, Sir Richard,” said Doctor Blunt, “and let us consider the matter more calmly. It may not be as bad as it seems at first. Where did you leave Miss Davenport?”

I related, as briefly and as clearly as I could, all that had occurred after Bessy and I took shelter in the angle of the wood; and in doing so, in some degree recovered hope and confidence from the recollection that Bessy was not left alone, and that Zed had more than once declared that some one, whom he called Colonel Halliday, had passed that way with a party of white men.

“Come, come; this is not so bad,” said

Billy Byles, "if she had got old Jenny with her. That was worth a troop of horse; for she's a 'cute old girl, and knows what she's about quite well. Then, if Halliday passed that way, he has, most likely, taken them all with him to some place of safety."

"But this story may be as false as the other Zed told me," I replied.

"I don't think that," answered Billy Byles; "he had a reason for telling the one lie, and none for telling the other. But I'll soon know. Uncle Jack was with Master Zed, and he'll tell the truth, at all events."

Thus saying, he left the room, and returned in a minute, saying—

"It is quite true; Halliday was there with six or seven men. Uncle Jack saw him in the wood; and, depend upon it, he has taken Bessy away with him."

"I can hardly think she would go," I replied, "without taking some means to let me know she was safe."

“Oh, you cannot tell,” said Billy Byles; “he might be in haste, and hurry her away. Halliday is a wild dog, and not to be contradicted by man or woman, when he has got any notion in his head—but from your own account, you must be nearly starving, Sir Richard.”

“God bless me! I beg your pardon, I never thought of that,” said Dr. Blunt. “The stores of our garrison are not very sumptuous; but they can get you a slice of ham and some bread in a minute.”

The food was soon brought, and a bottle of most excellent Madeira. But I had scarcely eaten two mouthfuls and drank one glass of wine, when a boy’s voice was heard calling loudly from above—

“Father, father, the moon is just getting up, and I think I see the negroes gathering at the edge of the wood.”

“Here, boys, pull in all these shutters,” cried Doctor Blunt; “and make them as fast as

possible. Then each man take his station as he was told before, only at the up-stairs windows instead of these. Move up the powder-flasks and the bullets. Don't hurry, Sir Richard, don't hurry; we shall have plenty of time."

"Less time for eating than for fighting and drinking, I suspect," said Billy Byles. "Here, Sir Richard, let me fill your tumbler. I'll take one for company. I say Blunt, order half a dozen of this Madeira to the rooms up-stairs. It is dry work, fighting upon cold water."

"Ay, bold Billy Byles to the last," said Dr. Blunt; "but we'll have the wine up and some brandy, too; for some of our people may want a little of that kind of courage, though you don't, Byles."

"Father, father," cried the boy's voice again; "I can see them coming through the corn."

"How many are there?" shouted Dr. Blunt.

“Twenty or thirty, I should guess,” replied the boy; “but I can’t count them, they are so close together.”

While all this had been taking place, several men, some black, but mostly white, had been closing the windows and barricading them as well as they could; and as soon I had drunk the wine which Mr. Byles had poured out for me, I made a little tour through the lower rooms to see that everything had been rendered as secure as possible.

I then accompanied Doctor Blunt and the rest of the party to the floor above.

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE the men were dispersing themselves, some going into one room, some into another, I turned directly into the right-hand room in front, which I judged to be that from the window of which the boy had challenged me as I came towards the house. He was still there, with a gun in his hand, and there was a candle burning on the table.

“This is my son, Sir Richard,” said the Doctor, who accompanied me.

Turning round from his post, the boy shook

hands with me frankly. He was a fine-looking lad, with bright eyes; but he could not have been more than thirteen or fourteen years of age. Pointing with his hand, he said—

“There they come, father; but they are mighty slow about it.”

“You had better put out the lights on this floor, Doctor Blunt,” I said. “They will only serve to direct the enemy’s fire, and lose us the advantage which the position of the moon gives. We are in shadow here; but you perceive we can see almost every pebble of the ground out there.”

“To be sure! to be sure! well thought of! Put out all the lights,” said Doctor Blunt.

“Now will you go round, Doctor,” I continued, “and see that every man has his ammunition close at hand. I wonder if these bullets will fit my gun.”

“They are quite small,” said the Doctor, moving away; “you had better put two or three in.”

When he was gone, I approached the window at which the boy was still standing ; and, leaning out, took a general survey of the moonlight scene which presented itself before the house. It was one which, at other times, or on any ordinary occasion, would have presented no single point of interest. The ground was very nearly flat—slightly undulating, indeed, towards the eastward with a small lawn or field in front of the house, and an orchard of what seemed peach and plum trees, at about a hundred and fifty yards' distance. Sweeping all round the horizon, was a dense belt of forest-ground, dark in the shadowy moonlight, like evening clouds upon the edge of the sky ; and the space within this barrier of wood was lighted up by the full, clear beams of the rising planet. It was one of those nights which, on this continent, are peculiarly beautiful ; when the moon drowns, in her own effulgence, all the stars immediately round herself, but leaves the rest of the sky full of bright

luminaries, which, large and full, seem to vie the one with the other in aiding her to make up for the absence of the sun. Fields which had been cultivated, and from most of which the crops had been reaped, to the extent of five or six hundred acres, lay around me within the belt of forest; and on the right extended, first, the stubble field, fifty or sixty acres in extent, and then the wide field of Indian corn, not yet gathered in.

The maize presents a somewhat curious appearance in the calm moonlight—an appearance, at least, to which we are unaccustomed in Europe, especially when it is ripe. It looks almost white, yet something tells you—I know not well what—that it is not snow which covers the land. Often it is so tall that a man of full height could pass through it unperceived; but the spring this year had been backward, little rain had fallen, and the corn was considered stunted and deficient. Thus, when I had passed through that field, the long reed-

like stalks, with their broad leaves, had not reached higher than my shoulder; and I could now plainly perceive a thick group of dark objects making its way towards the house, still at the distance of a quarter of a mile.

All in external nature was very calm and still and pleasant; and the flat and somewhat monotonous scene acquired an aspect almost picturesque, from the accessories of light and shade, and the resplendent heaven above it. But there was that moving group of black objects, which, sometimes pausing for an instant, and always proceeding very slowly and cautiously, kept still advancing towards the house, and added a different sort of interest to the scene.

While I was making my survey I continued to charge my gun, and endeavoured, to the best of my power, to calculate the number of the enemy. I could only make out twenty-four; and I do not think I was wrong by more

than one or two on either side. In the meantime, the boy stood beside me, apparently calm and tranquil, without saying a word. There was an heroic sort of quietude in his demeanour which struck me very much. I knew that through the whole of the South of the United States, the idea of a revolt of the slaves is one of those fearful phantoms of the imagination which is present to the minds of all men, although, in the affairs of business, or the excitement of pleasure, they may, from custom, forget it, and take no notice of the shadow of Nemesis which is cast upon the festal board—the sword suspended by a hair, which hangs over the head even of the lord of the feast. They are like people inhabiting a volcanic region, who trim their vines, and sing and dance in their harvests, forgetting altogether the proximity of danger and death, till the first tremulous motion of the earth announces the coming earthquake, and then they start up

confused and alarmed by the coming of events which they might have foreseen in the due course of nature.

That boy's coolness and tranquillity, in the circumstances in which we were placed, struck me very much. None of us at that time could tell how all these things were to end: no one was aware how far the conspiracy had extended, or what preparations had been made to insure its success. All that we knew was, that the blacks were infinitely superior in number to the whites; that they had risen with merciless fury against their masters; and that they had not yet met with any decisive check; that every house they had attacked they had taken without difficulty, and massacred the inhabitants without consideration of age or sex.

Such was our position; yet that boy stood there beside me as cool and quiet as if there was no risk or danger in the coming contest.

"Now, my good lad," I said, after I had

taken my survey, "you and I are to defend this window, I suppose."

"I suppose so, sir," he said; "my father told me to stay here."

"Are you not a little nervous?" I asked, with a smile.

"Yes sir," he answered frankly; "but I always do what father tells me."

"Well," I answered, "there is no great danger, and you are a good, brave fellow. I have seen a good many of these affairs; and it is such hearts as yours that always carry victory with them. Now, I am an old soldier and an officer, so you must obey orders. Go and get a pillow from the bed, and place it on the window-sill. Now, kneel down there; rest your gun quietly over; fix upon the man you intend to shoot, keeping him always under cover of the muzzle, and do not fire until I tell you. I'll bet you a dollar you'll bring him down."

"Won't you have a pillow, too?" asked the boy.

“No,” I answered; “I intend to stand here, covered by this corner of the window frame; but you had better whisper by a hint of what man you intend to fire at, that we may not both mark the same.”

“I’ll fire at the biggest,” said the boy. “I am more sure to hit him.”

“And I will take the little one,” I answered. “We shall give a good account of both, depend upon it.”

There was no real levity in what I said; for I could not but feel, that whatever might be the lad’s inherent courage, yet with his want of experience in such scenes of strife and bloodshed, there must be some awe, if not timidity.

In the meantime, Doctor Blunt passed along from room to room, seeing that all his little garrison were well placed, and doing his duty as commander-in-chief very creditably. At length he returned to us, before he took his

own post at one of the windows, slapping his son on the shoulder, and saying—

“Well, Simon, my lad, here you are, under the command of a gallant officer, who, I see, has taken care of you. Do your duty boldly, my son, and we will give these fellows a peppering.”

“I will try, father,” replied the boy, modestly, and Doctor Blunt continued looking out.

“Ay, they have come into the open ground. They have determined upon it, but I think we can match them.”

“You had better, I think, reserve your fire, Doctor Blunt;” I said. “If they should perceive us at the windows, as probably they will, let them fire at us first. If they make a rush to break into the lower story, they are lost with the small number they have; for we can pick them off at our ease, if we do it coolly, while they cannot touch us up here.”

“Do you give the word, Sir Richard, will

you?" said Doctor Blunt. "I will tell the people not to fire till you speak."

"Very well," I answered; "but let each mark his man as he comes up, and keep him constantly covered, that the first fire may be a telling one. Those who have double-barrelled guns, had better reserve the second barrel, that they may keep the enemy employed while they are re-loading."

"I understand, I understand," said my host. "I will go and tell them all; but you cannot expect very well disciplined soldiers here, Sir Richard"

"We must do our best, my good sir," I answered; "and I have no doubt of the result. One of us is equal to five or six of them, when we are not taken asleep in our beds."

Doctor Blunt moved away to give the orders I had suggested, and I again put my head out of the window. The body of insurgents was now not a hundred and fifty yards from the house; but I don't think they saw

me, for that side of the building was completely in shadow. They advanced very cautiously, however, taking advantage of the trees of the peach-orchard, to cover their approach; and there was evidently some hesitation at its verge, before they came out in the clear moonlight. They might, indeed be laying their plan of attack.

At length, one man came forth, about ten or twenty yards before the rest, and took a leisurely survey of the whole front of the house. I was greatly afraid that some of our party would fire; but all kept still. At length, the negro returned to his companions; and then they marched forward in a long, straggling line; each man with his gun raised to his shoulder, covering the upper windows.

“Keep down!” I said, to my young companion; “keep your head down, and let them fire. Then raise yourself, choose your man, and when I give the word, pull the trigger.”

I have always found it a very difficult thing

to get men to reserve their fire. There is a sort of natural anxiety to have the first chance, which causes many a shot to be thrown away. There was no nervousness, however, upon the present occasion ; and all remained profoundly still, while the insurgents advanced to within about thirty paces of the house. We could now see all the men distinctly ; so much so, as nearly to distinguish their features, though that is somewhat difficult with a negro, even in the daylight. They evidently saw us too, and our white faces made us a better mark ; but, as I had expected, the having to fire upward, disturbed their aim.

When they were at the distance I have mentioned, the word "Halt !" was pronounced ; and the whole line came to a stand. Then there seemed to be some little hesitation ; but, after a moment, some one shouted, "Fire !" And nine or ten guns went off right at the windows. The glass crashed and rattled above us in the upper part of the frame, and a bullet

seemed to strike the wall just below where I was standing ; but not a single shot took effect upon any body in the house.

I had a great mind to let them come a little nearer still, that we might be more sure of our aim ; but I knew that every one was impatient round me ; and, seeing a movement amongst the negroes, as if to make a rush upon the lower part of the house, I gave the word to fire. Every one was prepared ; every one had selected his man, and all the guns went off almost at once.

Never was such a scene as now ensued. Six or seven of the insurgents fell down at once ; and then there was a general scamper. Away they went in every different direction—tumbling over their fallen companions—running against the trees of the orchard—throwing away their guns to fly the better ; and showing every symptom of that panic-terror, which so generally accompanies want of discipline.

From the boldness with which they had marched up to the house, and the deliberation with which they had fired, I had not thought that the affair would be so soon over; but they were now evidently routed beyond any chance of a rally; and I gave one tall, big fellow, who was running faster than any of the rest, the advantage of my second barrel. He stumbled and fell, but was up again in a moment, and away, though he must have been wounded. Several more shots were fired amongst the fugitives, from the other windows.

Running round to Doctor Blunt, I said—

“If we make a sally now, we may capture some of them.”

Three or four of the gentlemen followed me down stairs; and, rushing out, we got into the orchard, as fast as possible, amongst the trees of which, several of the insurgents were endeavouring to shelter themselves, from the

shots which had been coming after them from the windows ; though they might have made a good fight of it still, had they not been so completely scared. But no resistance was offered. Three or four ran away across the fields as fast as they could go, when they saw white faces in the orchard ; but we captured two of them and marched them up towards the house.

On the spot where the negro line had been formed, we found the rest of our party, with a lantern and a sort of link or flambeau, examining the fallen. Billy Byles was hauling up one of the wounded men, while Doctor Blunt and another gentleman were stooping down over a tall fellow who seemed quite dead, and holding the link to his face as if they saw something very curious in it.

“The most curious head I ever beheld,” said Doctor Blunt’s companion. “Did you ever see such a development? The organ of com-

bativeness enormously full, and destructiveness as big as my fist. I must have that head for my cabinet, doctor."

"Ah, Sir Richard, I see you have brought in a prisoner," said Doctor Blunt, raising his head as I came up with the man I had taken. "This is my friend, Doctor ——, the famous phrenologist."

"Did you ever see such an extraordinary head, Sir Richard?" said the enthusiastic professor of what was then almost a new science. "Why, it is all back; it has neither top nor front. The posterior portion must weigh ten times the anterior. You, sir, what's your name?" he continued, turning to my prisoner. "Do you know who this is?"

"That is Will, sir," answered the unfortunate man. "That is the gentleman who said we were to kill all the babies."

"There, I told you so!" cried the doctor, rejoicing in the triumph of his art. "He could not help it. That organ of destructiveness

did it all. That man should never have been suffered to go loose. Henceforth, if crimes are committed, it is the fault of society. We can always detect the propensity to mischief by the certain laws of phrenology, and our business is to guard against it. If we suffer men like that to go loose, the crimes they commit are chargeable to our own negligence."

I was not inclined to stay longer to hear the worthy gentleman's dissertation ; and, touching Doctor Blunt's arm, I said—

"We had better return to the house and secure these two men. I must also ask you to do me the great favour of lending me a horse to ride to the county town ; for I cannot be satisfied till I see this Colonel Halliday."

"You had better postpone your journey till to-morrow morning," answered the doctor, walking with me towards the door. "Don't you think it will be dangerous to go alone at this time of night ?"

“Oh, no,” I replied. “These people will not rally; and you may be sure they brought up their whole force. If I am not mistaken, you may look upon the insurrection as at an end. They have met with a check which they will not soon recover; and your neighbours will have much to thank you for, Doctor Blunt.”

“Well, sir,” replied the doctor, evidently much gratified, “I trust we have done our duty; and if every one will do his duty in such circumstances, the state will have nothing to fear.”

“Your gallant young son, sir, has done his duty too, nobly,” “I replied; I am quite sure he brought down his man; he was as steady as an old soldier.”

“I am delighted to hear you say so, Sir Richard,” answered the father, doubtless with a proud heart. “He has been brought up to obey orders without hesitation, and I trust he has a right—a hereditary right to courage.

His family has not produced a coward, sir, and I trust it never will ; but you had better come in and finish your supper, Sir Richard, while they get a horse for you. Will it not be better to have one saddled for your man, Zed, likewise? He knows the roads more thoroughly than you do I suspect, and might be of assistance to you in case of danger."

I gladly embraced the offer ; and was not sorry, to say sooth, for some more food. Nor did I altogether refrain from Doctor Blunt's good wine ; for I felt that night more than I ever did in my life, those sensations which doubtless lead many a man to drunkenness—the need of something to keep up my spirits, to enable me to cast off the load of thought, and pursue my course amidst whatever painful circumstances might surround me.

I did not drink much, it is true ; for out of the bottle of Madeira, set by my side, several of my companions in the late affray, came in and helped themselves very liberally. In fact,

for the next half hour, as may be well supposed, the house of Doctor Blunt presented a scene of excitement and confusion, sufficient to banish everything like sober thought. Every one was talking; every one was moving about; every one was asking questions, and nobody answering them; some were examining where the balls had struck; many were describing their own deeds, and telling how they had picked off their man; and certainly if all had been done which they asserted, a dozen negroes must have fallen instead of six. All were talking; some were laughing loudly; and, strange to say, even the captured and wounded negroes were joining in the merriment, almost as if they had been of the victorious, instead of the defeated, party.

I saw one fellow, sitting in the hall, just opposite the door, with a bullet through his shoulder, and his hands tied behind him, show his white teeth from one end of the range to the other, exclaiming, with a laugh—

“I wish somebody would tie my hands afore instead of behind. My golly, how hot dat hole feel ! I tink dey must shoot wid red-hot shot.”

At length it was announced that the horses were ready, and I rose to depart.

“What, going, Sir Richard !” exclaimed Billy Byles, coming in. “Hang it, you have stolen a march upon them. I shall go in to-night. Blunt, you had better march the prisoners in. There’s no use of keeping them here all night. Hadn’t you better wait for us, Sir Richard ?”

“No, my good friend,” I answered ; “I cannot rest satisfied till I hear more of Miss Davenport.”

Billy Byles was of that sanguine and unmoveable disposition, which from one success infers that everything else must go right, and he answered—

“Oh, she is quite safe, depend upon it.” Al hough not an hour before, on hearing of

the situation in which she had been left, he had exclaimed, "Poor Bessy!" in tones of melancholy augury which still rang in my ears.

I declined to delay my departure, however; and, shaking hands with young Blunt as I passed, I walked forward to the door, where the horses stood. Zed crept after me slowly, with much the air of an offending dog, who expects, as he follows his master's heels, to have a kick every minute, and keeps himself prepared to jump back and avoid the blow.

Much shaking of hands took place on the steps of the house; but, at length, I mounted, and took my way on.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was as bright and beautiful a night as ever was seen; and the roads through the woods, flooded with waves of light and shade, were full of tranquil grandeur. In one spot, the eye could wander deep into the heart of the forest, guided by the moon-beams, as they rested here upon a piece of green turf, there upon a swelling mass of wild plants, here caught upon the bough of an old tree, there glistening amongst the reeds of plashy savannah. At another time, a deep, heavy mass of giant trees, mingled with

evergreens, intercepted the rays, and cast a thick shadow over the path, only enlivened by the prospect of another gleam of brightness beyond.

Silently I rode forward. A sudden and momentous strife and excitement, had interrupted my thoughts and feelings in their natural current; dammed them up, as it were; but only to flow over again, with deeper, though somewhat stiller, waves.

I need not say that all my thoughts were of Bessy Davenport. They were very anxious, very gloomy, very bitter. I blamed myself for having left her at all. I thought that if she had met with danger or death, I should never forgive myself. No language which I can find, will convey any idea of the sensations I experienced—the internal shudder, as it were, the wringing of the very heart of my spirit, when my mind rested, even for a moment, on her possible, nay her probable fate. It was in vain I tried to console myself by

trying to think I had acted for the best. The homely but true and startling words of Billy Byles, came back to my mind; "D——n the best; it is always the worst thing a man can do;" and I was ready to pile curses upon my own head, for having abandoned, even for a moment, the task of protecting the dear girl, with which Heaven seemed to have charged me.

Censure on myself, however, made me feel inclined to be more lenient to others. Poor Zed, though I could not help feeling some bitterness still, had only done according to his views and capacity, what I had done myself. He had acted for the best; and, softening towards him, I called him up to my side; for hitherto he had ridden two or three horse-lengths behind me.

"Tell me Zed," I said, "and now, mind you tell me the truth, for I will forgive anything rather than falsehood."

"I will tell the truth if I can, master,"

answered Zed ; “ but sometimes when I’m in a hurry, I can’t tell de truth. The lies come so thick and fast, they get all the uppermost, and I have no time to put them down, and get the truth up from de bottom of de well, as men say.”

“ Well then, take time and do not hurry,” I answered. “ You say you saw Colonel Halliday in the wood. Was that true ?”

“ Oh, yes, indeed, master,” he answered. “ I saw him there, and six or seven men with him.”

“ Was he on hcrseback or on foot ?” I asked.

“ He had been on horse-back,” replied Zed ; “ but he left his horses in de path, and went in on foot, just where the two roads meet. I heard him swear he saw a large smoke, and he would know what it was. I did not let him see me, for he is a wild man, and was just as like to cut me and uncle Jack down as not, because we had black skins.”

“Then he went right on towards the smoke?” I demanded.

“Yes, that he did,” replied the man; “and he must have gone some way down, for his voice sounded quite small when he came out upon the road again, and he halloed to the people to bring him down the horses.”

“Then he did not find any of the negroes?” I asked.

“No, how could he?” answered Zed; “for they did not come up till he was gone. They saw him, I guess; and scattered to keep out of his way. But he came first, that’s certain. I can’t tell quite sure where he went, for I did not see him go; but he could not have been gone long before you came up.”

The man’s words gave me great comfort; for it seemed certainly more than probable, that if he pursued the course Zed mentioned, he must have found Bessy and old Jenny where I had left them, and taken them away under his escort; although I could not understand

how the former happened to have quitted the place without leaving something to indicate what had occurred. She knew—she could not but know—the deep anxiety I should feel; and Bessy Davenport's was not a heart, I thought, to look upon that anxiety lightly.

However, still I was comforted. Hope and expectation revived; and as soon as we got upon the high road, I pushed my horse on rapidly towards Jerusalem. He went very slow, it seemed to me; and indeed he was not the very best-blooded animal that ever was mounted. But, at length, we came to a spot where the town was first visible in the daylight; and there Zed, who knew the whole country well, checked his horse, exclaiming—

“Gorra mighty, master! they have set the town a'fire.”

At first sight, it seemed so; for up above the little town, rose upon the sky a bright, red

glare which could be produced by no ordinary cause. I checked my horse, too, and contemplated the blaze for a moment or so ; but I remarked, that the glare was steadfast, not rising and falling, nor spreading from place to place ; and that though some flicker and some rolls of smoke were visible, yet there was none of that rapid change, or those thick, curling clouds which always hang over a considerable conflagration. In fact, it was more like the glare which hangs over a large and well-lighted city, than that of a fire.

“ We will go on, Zed, and see,” I said ; “ I can’t tell what this blaze is ; the town is certainly not on fire.”

“ Very well, master,” said Zed, without the slightest hesitation ; and on we pushed at the same rate as before.

As we came to the first houses of the little town, we could hear the loud murmur of many voices, proceeding from the central part of the

place; and, riding on, we came upon a very strange and even picturesque scene.

I have before described, I think, the little market-place of the town, which the good people of the country have thought fit to call Jerusalem, upon what grounds or pretences, it is impossible to discover; for certainly neither in architecture nor construction, nor natural site, does it bear the slightest resemblance to the capital of the kingdom of Judah. However, when the Mount Ida of this country is a hillock, not much bigger than a man's knuckles, and Syracuse is completely an inland town, it becomes clear that the people had very little reference to the old world in the names they have bestowed in the new.

On one side of the square, stood the inn, a wooden building of no great extent with what is called the liberty-pole right in front. When I had been there before, the bright, burning sun had shone distinctly on the groups of

farmers and gentlemen coming from the country on business, with their waggons, horses and dogs. A different light now presented the place under a different aspect. A fire of pitch-pine logs was burning in the middle of the little space at the distance of perhaps sixty yards from the inn ; and close to the building itself were a number of torches, some in the hands of mulattoes or negroes, some fixed to stakes set in the ground, to posts, to rails, or anything to which they could be attached.

By the red glare of the fire and of these torches, could be seen the fronts of the various houses round ; the windows crowded with faces, principally of women, in every sort of dress and undress ; and numerous groups of men, scattered over the space below, all armed, many on horseback, talking, laughing, gesticulating, and, in some instances, swearing.

In front of the right wing of the inn was a

little body of cavalry, not very regularly drawn up in line, nor was every man upon his horse; but there they were, about thirty or forty, stout, tall, powerful fellows, who would have put all the insurgents who had ever yet been mustered in Virginia to the rout in a minute. A group of officers, intermingled with a dozen or so of gentlemen, amongst whom I recognized my long-boned friend, the sheriff, stood immediately before the door of the inn, all in vehement and eager discussion, while just above their heads was a sort of balcony, running along the whole front of the inn, crowded with ladies, some sitting and some standing.

Tremendous was the confusion, great the noise, and terrible the glare; and every now and then a fresh movement and different arrangement of parties took place, when a horseman or two would ride in, from this side or that; and from each of the groups several

persons would detach themselves, and ride up to inquire what intelligence the new-comers brought.

I myself was thus assailed as soon as I entered the market-place.

“Which side do you come from, sir?” asked one.

“Have you seen anything of the niggers?” interrogated another.

“Did you see anything of Captain Jones’s party?” demanded a third.

“Has any fresh house been attacked?” cried a fourth.

“One at a time, gentlemen; one at a time,” I replied; “and I will answer you. Then you shall give me an answer to one question. I come from the side of Dr. Blunt’s house. I have seen plenty of the negroes—all, I fancy, which they have in the field. I did not meet with Captain Jones’s party; and the last house the negroes attacked, or will attack, I

imagine, was Dr. Blunt's. And now if you please—”

“What came of it? what came of it?” cried half-a-dozen voices, before I could propound my own question.

“They were repulsed with considerable loss,” I replied. “Six were killed or severely wounded, two were taken prisoners, and the whole body was dispersed; I suspect, never to meet in any force again.”

“Hurra! hurra!” shouted the little crowd that had gathered round, and off they ran to spread the intelligence over the place.

I took the liberty of catching one gentleman, however, by the arm before he could get away, saying—

“On my life, this is hardly fair, gentlemen. I have answered all your questions, and you do not stay to answer mine. May I ask if Colonel Halliday has been in the town lately?”

“Colonel Halliday?” cried the good man; “why, yes, he was here not half-an-hour ago

with his party—he may be here now for aught I know.”

“Had he a lady with him?” I demanded.

“Oh, yes, a whole drove of ’em,” answered my companion, who seemed a bit of a wag. “Funniest sight you ever saw—half of them mounted on horseback in their night-shirts.”

Thus saying, he broke away from me, and joined the principal group before the inn-door. Towards it, also, I directed my horse; but the gentlemen composing it, instantly moved forward in mass towards me as soon as they heard the intelligence I brought, and I was surrounded in a moment, by twelve or fifteen persons, and overwhelmed with innumerable questions at once. The sheriff alone was quiet and practical.

“Glad to see you, Sir Richard,” he said; “perhaps you will give us a brief statement of what occurred at Dr. Blunt’s; for if you answer all these questions, we shall have daylight upon us before we have done.”

As it was evident I should get no satisfaction myself, till they were all satisfied, I thought it best to comply with the sheriff's suggestion; but, in the meantime, all the other groups began to draw near to hear the intelligence also; and I was soon surrounded and even pressed upon by at least two hundred people.

"Speak loud, speak loud!" cried one.

"Bring him a drink," said another. "Dare say the gentleman's thirsty."

"He had fighting enough to make him so," said Zed, who kept close to me, evidently in some alarm of the results of the general objections to his colour.

I went on with my story, however, making it as brief, but as clear as I could, and taking care to notice the gallantry of young Blunt, which called a sort of half-cheer from the people.

But they did not seem to care much about details, and were soon satisfied. Man by man,

they began to drop off, or broke up into parties to talk the matter over in their own little synods ; and, springing from my horse, I took the sheriff's arm, saying—

“ I want to speak a word or two with you, Mr. Sheriff. Take my horse to the door of the inn, Zed—I suppose he will be safe. He is a very faithful fellow, and has saved my life.”

“ Oh, quite safe,” answered the sheriff. “ Don't you see we have as many blacks as whites here? This bad spirit is by no means general. Had it been so, we might have fared worse, though it has been bad enough, God knows, as it is.”

Zed led away my horse ; and, being left nearly alone with the sheriff, I explained to him my anxiety about Bessy—told him the cause I had to suppose that she had been found in the wood by Colonel Halliday, and carried to some place of safety ; and asked if he had seen that gentleman in the town.

“ Oh, yes, he was here a little while ago,”

answered the sheriff. "He brought in several ladies with him; but I really did not notice who they were. He took them to the inn, I think, and you had better see if you can find Miss Davenport there."

END OF VOL. II.

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